

TOP STORY: THE CHEMICAL THREAT TO HUMAN REPRODUCTION

March 7 - 20, 1998

IN THESE TIMES

the alternative newsmagazine

THE POLITICS OF PORN

A SPECIAL ISSUE

WITH ESSAYS BY SUSIE BRIGHT,
DAVID FUTRELLE, LEORA TANENBAUM,
DAVID MCCABE AND LEANNE KATZ

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E D I T O R I A L

SOMETIMES, STICKING TO PRINCIPLES IS BEST

The Clinton health plan, if such a thing can still be said to exist, is in trouble. Even before the powerful Business Roundtable announced its opposition last month, the president had said that everything in the plan except universal coverage was up for grabs. As is his wont, Clinton has made concessions to the right at just about every step in the process of promoting his scheme. Now, it seems, the only people remaining on board for the plan's original version—beside the bureaucrats who drew it up—are labor unions and liberal “realists.”

This is both ironic and sad, for the forces that are now left holding the empty shell of Clinton's plan didn't really like it in the first place. Almost without exception, they had originally advocated a Canadian-style single-payer system, one that would guarantee universal coverage, the elimination of bureaucratic waste and profit by insurance companies, and free choice of doctors and hospitals.

There is a single-payer bill in Congress—the McDermott-Wellstone bill. It is the only plan that would guarantee quality health care to all Americans and at the same time cut health care costs. And it has the support of 94 sponsors in the House and five in the Senate.

But liberal pundits argue that since single-payer doesn't seem to have a chance of passing, we must be realistic and abandon it. *The New Yorker*, for example, pontificated last month that “the constellation of political forces in the United

States at the moment” is such that “a nice, tidy, rational, sensible, humane Canadian-style plan is not a possibility.”

From this, they concluded that the left should give up and endorse the Clinton plan, even though “the health care system that emerges from [the current debate] is going to be a mess.” Those who argue this way have half a point. A single-payer plan has no chance of passing in this session of Congress. But it is precisely because labor and liberal “pragmatists” jumped into Clinton's hip pocket before the fight began that Clinton's plan will fare just as badly.

The New Yorker unwittingly explained the fatal weakness of the approach it implicitly endorsed. “In order to run the gauntlet of America's fragmented legislative machinery,” they wrote, “any plan must have the support

of a working coalition that includes enough of the interested constituencies to prevail over the constituencies that oppose it.”

Think about what that means. Legislation is a process of contesting for public support, and of negotiation among different interest groups. The more effectively a group promotes its principles and program, the greater its influence, especially in Congress, which is the branch of government most susceptible to public pressure. If the best plan is abandoned by major supporters without a fight—and especially if the principles underlying that plan are not publicly defended and espoused—the debate can only shift to other ground.

That, of course, is exactly what has happened. With single-payer proponents split (and with the strongest institutional forces on the left in his camp) Clinton is free to bend in the wrong direction. Giving in without a fight has not strengthened the president's left hand; it has merely tied it behind his back.

But in the long run—and the health care battle will be a long one—there is a much more important reason for progressive forces to insist on a single-payer plan. The Clinton plan, even if adopted in its original form, would increase costs by hundreds of billions of dollars, create a huge new bureaucracy and give the five giant insurance companies power over allocation and quality of care. If the left is identified with this “mess,” it will have little or no role in the long battles ahead.

Much better that universal health care advocates begin to distinguish themselves and their principles from those that now govern the administration. If that is done—if those of us on the left become identified with the principles underlying single-payer and remain sharp critics of “managed competition”—we can only be strengthened as the struggle unfolds. And, in the end, we will have a single-payer plan, both because it is more humane and because it will deliver on its promises.

IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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LETTERS

Wrong targets

In her review of *Facing Up* (ITT, Feb. 7), Nancy Folbre reports that author Peter Peterson advocates eliminating tax loopholes that favor the rich and hiking taxes on gasoline and cigarettes. Few on the left will disagree with these proposals, but nobody on the left should be so naively taken in by the bulk of Peterson's "ardent deficit-cutter" programs. Peterson's writings and public declarations make his priorities unmistakable: he is much less eager to talk about raising taxes than about shrinking the already modest U.S. welfare state.

Folbre backs Peterson's emphasis on cutting social spending on "the affluent"—defined as anyone earning more than \$60,000. But this is a wholly arbitrary threshold on which to base

any broad social or economic policy—as is Peterson's proposed \$35,000 income ceiling for receiving Social Security retirement benefits. Folbre fails to point out that this figure itself is revised downward by Peterson, from the \$40,000 ceiling so piously urged upon us by Paul Tsongas, one of Peterson's Concord Coalition allies.

For Folbre, Peterson's version of tough love spotlights a "major weakness of liberalism: its reluctance to acknowledge that the needs of the poor cannot be met simply by taxing the richest of the rich." This is not only rhetorical, it is wrong. Relative to gross domestic product, tax burdens in the United States are the lowest of any developed nation in the world, indicating that "the rich" should be paying substantially more in taxes for all purposes. This reveals another Peterson

priority that escapes Folbre's notice—to deflect attention away from the fairest, least regressive and most democratic public finance tool available, namely, the progressive personal income tax.

Folbre also fails to inform *ITT* readers of Peterson's obsession with Social Security (which is, incidentally, producing a \$60 billion per year *surplus* for the federal budget). She swallows his warnings about the dubious "actuarial value" of Social Security contributions hook, line and sinker, thereby supporting one of his many objectionable tactics—applying the politically correct language of the "free market" to a non-market program, probably the most successful one in U.S. history.

It is disconcerting that someone like Folbre should praise both Peterson and Ross Perot for their "basic decency" and then advise the left to "challenge the structure of a Social Security system that pits the elderly against the young by guaranteeing the welfare of one but not the other." It is precisely Peterson and company who have been promoting intergenerational warfare with scare tactics about Social Security. One wonders whether Folbre would slash Social Security to put the elderly on an equal footing with the young, or whether she would instead increase welfare for the young by expanding public jobs programs. If the latter, let her try out that idea on Peterson.

Richard B. Du Boff
Haverford, Pa.

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



Deficit mania

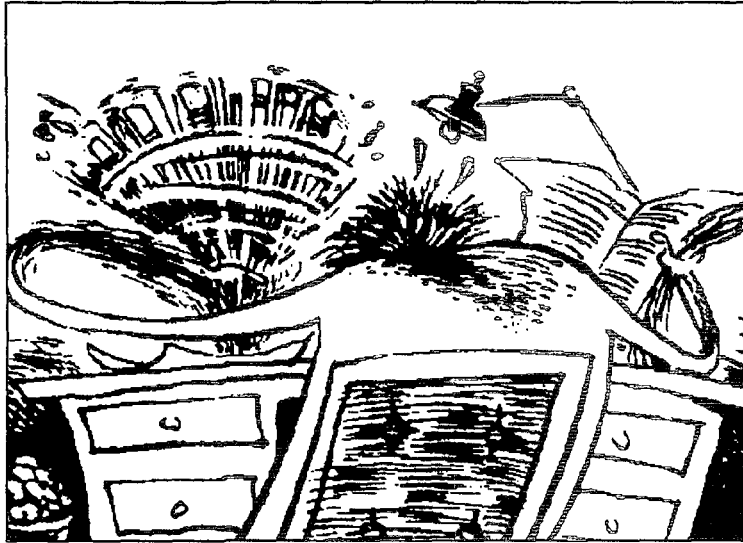
It was disturbing to see Nancy Folbre's positive review of Pete Peterson's budget-cutting crusade (*ITT*, Feb. 7). While Folbre (and Peterson) make some valid points, endorsing the deficit hawks' crusade, in the current political context, can only have negative consequences. Keeping the deficit as the central issue in the national economic debate is a bad idea.

Social Security is the one social program we have that clearly works. It brings large numbers of people out of poverty with minimal bureaucracy and waste, and its cost will remain constant as a share of gross domestic product for the foreseeable future. In the years before Social Security, poverty rates among the elderly were considerably higher than for the rest of the population; now, they are slightly lower. However, relatively few elderly people are affluent. Without Social Security and other government benefits more than half of the elderly would still be below the poverty line.

The fact that this anti-poverty program draws such wide support can only be attributed to its being a universal program. Of course, this means wealthy people get Social Security too (just like they get interest on government bonds), but it seems a small price to pay to ensure most of our elderly a decent existence.

There is a logical problem in cutting Social Security that the Peterson breed of deficit hawk never seems to address. The program is currently running a surplus and will continue to be in surplus as far into the future as we can make reasonable projections. Is the suggestion that we cut benefits to make the surplus even larger, thereby financing the military and other spending from the most regressive tax around? (The Social Security tax applies only to wage

income, and since it is capped at about \$60,000 in annual wages, lower-income people pay a larger share of their wages in taxes than do high-income wage earners.) In short, it would be extremely hard to make the case, either politically or morally, that savings from cutting Social Security benefits should be used for anything other than lower Social Security taxes.



Current projections of the deficit over the next five years are more than \$115 billion lower than the ones that came out last summer. This is due to an improved economic forecast and lower projected growth in programs such as Medicare and Medicaid. While this should have been seen as freeing up funds for the type of social programs that Folbre and other *In These Times* readers support, virtually no one in Washington has even discussed this possibility. The projection of lower deficits has simply led the media and the politicians to set the standards of fiscal responsibility still higher.

Fighting the deficit is a phony battle. To join the Perot, Peterson, Tsongas crew is to guarantee that the nation's real problems get buried in budget-cutting mania, and to put the few worthwhile social programs we have in danger.

Dean Baker & Todd Schafer
Economic Policy Institute
Washington, D.C.

Nancy Folbre replies: My review of Peterson's book did not endorse, nor even praise, his deficit-cutting ambitions. Rather, it emphasized his persuasive arguments that government social programs benefit the affluent far more than the poor. Like Baker and Schafer, I think mainstream economists place far too much emphasis on deficit reduction. But I don't agree that the deficit is "not a problem." Future

economic growth rates may be low, and because the deficit is not being used to finance productive public investments, it threatens to increase the tax burden on future generations.

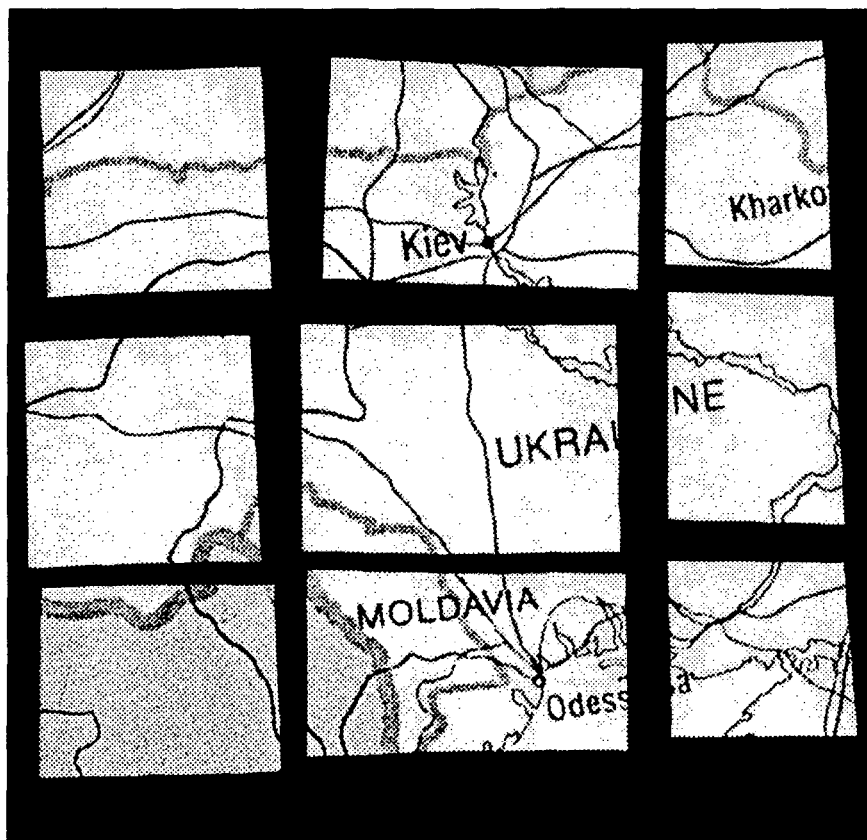
Are huge transfers to the affluent really the price we have to pay for modest assistance for the poor? While Social Security has improved the standard of living of the elderly, it has also reinforced

inequalities based on gender and age and discouraged elderly participation in class-based politics. (For more details, see my new book, *Who Pays for the Kids? Gender and the Structure of Constraint*, Routledge, 1994.)

The so-called Social Security "surplus" is an accounting fiction: this money is not being set aside nor invested to help pay future liabilities; it is helping finance the current deficit. Meanwhile, many affluent Social Security recipients are receiving what amount to welfare payments from the rest of us. We should either tax them more or give them less, so that we can better tend to the needs of the jobless and the poor.

Editor's note: Please try to keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you wished to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.

InSHORT



THE BALKANIZATION OF UKRAINE

A conflict with enormous potential repercussions for Europe is brewing between Ukraine and Russia. The confrontation already bears striking resemblance to the early phases of the Balkan wars, with the notable exception that none of the factions in former Yugoslavia had nuclear weapons. But disintegration in Ukraine is no more inevitable than was war in Bosnia, should the world community act decisively before words turn to violence.

There are two parallel sources of tension in Ukraine: the growing unhappiness of the Russian minority, and the geopolitical rivalry between Kiev and



By Woody Igou

Emission standards eased!

The *National Catholic Reporter* reports a major medical breakthrough! A Vatican-approved



vibrating machine that attaches to the testicles has proved successful in gathering

sperm for medical use as a "moral alternative to masturbation." The University of the Sacred Heart in Rome completed a survey of 17 men and concluded that "components that constitute the masturbation act would seem to be absent," such as "direct stimulation of the genital organ" and any "erotic feelings."

They are still working to perfect the device by making it painful.

Sacred/Profane, Inc.

In its continuing progression toward nation-state status, Walt Disney World is vastly expanding its participation in the wedding industry. Plans have been unveiled for a 250-



seat facility called the "Fairy Tale Wedding Pavilion." Weddings are a "growth industry"

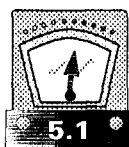
at Disney World, and last year more than 600 couples were married there at prices ranging from \$1,500 to \$100,000.

Disney has thus far declined requests to allow cartoon characters to participate in the weddings as best men, bridesmaids or priests.

Coming soon: Last Cruise Lines presents "Festi-Funeral Adventure Weekends."

The logic of fear

The *Philadelphia Inquirer's* recent analysis of 40 U.S. servicemen's deaths raised questions as to why the military



classified some deaths as "suicide." In one death so classified, the soldier was found shot

to death in the head with his hat stuffed in his mouth, handcuffs attached to his wrist and radio cable around his neck.

No wonder those body counts in Desert Storm were so low.

Necro-vanity publishing

Oregon poet and fly fisherman Donal Russell left in his will and testament a request to have his body skinned and tanned like leather. The leather is to be used to bind volumes of his verse. The



funeral director has denied the request based on corpse-abuse statutes.

Russell's widow has asked a judge to help her honor the request.

Look for more exciting volumes from Dahmer Publishing this fall!

APPALL-O-METER SCALE

1. Vapid Cultural Zephyrs
2. E Channel Stupid
3. Unauthorized Biography Zone
4. Republican Convention Rerun
5. Bob Dole Spieenic
6. Mega-Dittos from Hell
7. NRA Heart and Brains
8. Pyongyang on my mind
9. Disavowed by Bosnian Serbs
10. Hurry, Melt the Polar Cap!

Moscow. Should both of these conflicts continue to escalate and converge with one another, Ukraine could well break apart, with Russia making territorial bids on its southern and eastern regions.

Although ethnic Russians comprise 22 percent of Ukraine's total population of 52 million, they are not a typical East European "ethnic minority." Until independence in 1991, Ukrainians were considered "little Russians," and even today many Ukrainians east of Kiev use Russian as their mother tongue. In the wake of independence, Kiev went out of its way to grant the Russians far-reaching cultural rights. Most ethnic Russians backed Ukrainian statehood at the time.

But economic implosion and ethnic nationalism have combined to test the young Ukrainian state. In the Russian heartlands of the eastern Donbas and Crimea in the south, the catastrophic state of the economy has fueled disillusionment among Russians who are wondering whether they might not be better off with Mother Russia after all. Four-digit inflation and an average wage of \$20 a month spell an economic crisis far worse than in Russia.

Nor has Kiev's "Ukrainianization" campaign endeared the Russians to its cause. The response has been ever louder calls from the Russians for political and regional autonomy. As anywhere in Eastern Europe, in the western Ukraine these demands smack of separatism, a first move toward linking up with Russia.

For someone who experienced the onset of the Serb-Croat conflict in 1990, the scenario and mechanisms at work sound all too familiar. January elections in the 70-percent Russian Crimea put a Russian nationalist into office who began his campaign promising secession from Ukraine. Although he back-pedalled after a furious outcry from the Ukrainian parliament, the Crimean Russians plan a popular referendum this spring on joining the ruble zone. The vote came on the heels of elections in neighboring Belarus, where the victorious old-school communists immediately put plans in motion to establish a monetary union with Russia, which could lead to reunification.

Russia has never accepted Ukrainian possession of the Crimea, which was only transferred to its control in 1954. And even for Russians content in Ukraine, Russia exerts a certain pull. Whereas western Ukraine sees itself as part of eastern Europe, the eastern Russians identify with Russia. A split like this within a new state searching for its bearings in Europe presents the Kiev political elite with a balancing act that it cannot maintain for long.

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, the major sources of contention between Kiev and Moscow have been the 1,600 nuclear warheads on Ukrainian territory and the Black Sea fleet in Ukrainian waters. As the legal successor to the Soviet Union, Russia claims the nuke missiles and navy as its own. Ukraine has wavered over its relationship to the nukes, although it has never had operational control of the missiles. The firing code is in Moscow and will probably stay there, whatever Ukrainian ultra-nationalists may say.

Under heavy international pressure, Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk finally agreed early this year to transfer all of the warheads to Russia for disassembly. The decision provoked cries of treason in Kiev. The warheads and the Black Sea fleet are Ukraine's only trump cards, and without them they have nothing to ward off Russia or interest the West. Although signed away, the missiles are still in Ukraine, and will be dismantled very slowly over a period of seven years, as Kravchuk insisted. Until then, Ukrainian scientists will remain hard at work trying to crack the firing codes.

Despite repeated Russian assurances of the inviolability of Ukraine's bor-

ders, Kiev has ample reason to question its northern neighbors' intentions. The Russian ultra-nationalist camp, led by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, sees Ukraine as an essential part of a greater Russian empire. But even discounting extremists like Zhirinovskiy, there exists wide-scale agreement within Russian politics over Moscow's special interest in its "near abroad." Backed by liberals, Communists and nationalists alike, Yeltsin has staked out spheres of Russian influence in the former Soviet Union, which include the Baltics, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova in the west, the Caucasus in the south, and the Central Asian countries in the east. Although outside the near abroad, the former Warsaw Pact Central Europeans also have a special place in Russian interests, as Moscow made clear with its warning that NATO not expand a single kilometer eastward. By heeding Yeltsin, the West has essentially condoned future Russian influence there.

There is actually little Ukraine can do to hinder Russian infringement upon its sovereignty. At any moment, Moscow could stir Russian nationalism in east Ukraine as effortlessly as Belgrade did Serb nationalism in Croatia or Bosnia. Ukraine remains economically dependent on Russia as its largest source of trade, its greatest creditor and supplier of its energy needs. (See *In These Times*, Oct. 18, 1993.) Were Russia to isolate Ukraine, the Ukrainian economy would collapse in no time.

The economy remains key to Ukraine's stability. U.S. and international policy-makers are pushing Kravchuk to proceed more radically with reform, to apply the same shock-therapy recipe that has had such disastrous consequences elsewhere. International Monetary Fund-style austerity measures and full-speed privatization could prove a fatal blow to Ukraine, hitting the eastern rust belt first and hardest.

Ukraine needs substantial aid and loans for gradual restructuring, trade opportunities with the West, and binding security guarantees from both Russia and NATO. The international community cannot afford to make the same mistake with Russia that it did with Serbia, appeasing an expansionist power at the expense of its neighbors. The Eastern Europeans will not tolerate restrictions on their newly won sovereignty, nor should they. And, like the Bosnians, they will fight to defend it.

—Paul Hockenos

THE PRICE OF TEAMSTERS REFORM

If the 1.3 million Teamster union members don't approve a 25 percent dues increase, the international union and its strike fund will soon be broke. That's the message from reform president Ron Carey, who is sending rank-and-file members an unprecedented mail ballot referendum on the always touchy issue of dues hikes.

The referendum once again pits Carey, elected president in 1991, against the union's old guard. Compared to most unions, the Teamsters international union apparatus receives little money out of members' dues. The current dues of each rank-and-file Teamster is two hours pay per month—but the international only gets \$3.70 of that. The rest goes to locals, districts and regional conferences, where the old guard still retains much power.

Much of the international's financial trouble stems from the past decade, when the decline of membership eroded the international's income. And

MEDIA BEAT

By Pat Aufderheide

The children's hour

How much educational or informational programming for kids is on your commercial broadcast stations? If you can find it at all, it's often an hour or two a week, perhaps before 8 a.m. on Saturday morning. And, believe it or not, that's an improvement. The Children's Television Act of 1990 required broadcasters to carry educational and informational programming for children. Broadcasters responded by trying to fob off shows such as *Leave It to Beaver* and *GI Joe* as "educational."

The Clinton-era Federal Communications Commission (FCC) hasn't bought such bogus claims, and a flurry of fines has made stations suddenly interested in real educational programs. But not interested enough: All too often, the programs are shown at times when children are unlikely to watch them.

The latest program-sales convention suggests that broadcasters remain interested in showing only the bare minimum of educational shows required to satisfy the FCC. Sales of educational/informational shows were a mere blip on the screen, while high-action entertainment like *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* did well. The Washington, D.C.-based Center for Media Education continues to push for stiffer, clearer regulations to invest broadcasters in quality kidvid.

Threats and violence

Congress is not done rattling sabers at television executives

responsible for violent programming, though both broadcasters and cable companies have agreed to independent monitoring and rating of their programs. Senate Commerce Committee head Ernest Hollings (D-SC), who spent part of last year complaining that broadcasters had promised to take action for three decades without doing so, continues to push his legislation, which would ban violence in prime-time TV.

Meanwhile Paul Simon (D-IL), who started this round of congressional criticism years ago, is now begging his colleagues to back off, in the name of the First Amendment. Simon now concedes that it may be legally impossible to define violence precisely enough to devise action that won't set a dangerous precedent.

World culture?

Madonna has penetrated Indian pop fashion, with Indian music star Babydoll Alisha giving her songs a Hindi twist. Tunisian musicians are beefing up their traditional music performances with synthesizers. And Sri Lankans have seized on cassettes to play their traditional songs—although state radio won't air them because of political overtones.

In their new book, *Global Dreams: Imperial Corporations and the New World Order* (Simon & Schuster), Richard Barnett and John Cavanagh chart the global spread of commercial culture, and some of its unexpected consequences, offering an argument for more "globalization from below."

©1994 Pat Aufderheide

before Carey's arrival, the old guard operated at a deficit throughout the '80s, raiding the union's strike fund in 1989 to cover the problem. Then in 1991, in a factionalized bidding war triggered by rank-and-file reformer demands for higher strike benefits, the union's convention raised benefits for striking members from a maximum of \$55 a week to \$200 a week. The old, low strike benefits discouraged workers from taking on employers, thus weakening the union. But the reforms haven't come cheap. The international spends now \$34 million a year on strike benefits instead of \$4 million.

Since he came to office two years ago, Carey has trimmed some waste at the international, but he has also increased organizing and introduced new programs—such as the union's corporate campaign division—that seek novel ways to pressure employers. The new reform leadership has conducted high-profile crusades on political and collective bargaining issues and slowed the decline of union membership.

The net increase in international spending, apart from the strike fund, is relatively small. The biggest waste and dead wood in the union is still largely beyond the control of either Carey or the members in the intermediate bureaucracies and some local unions.

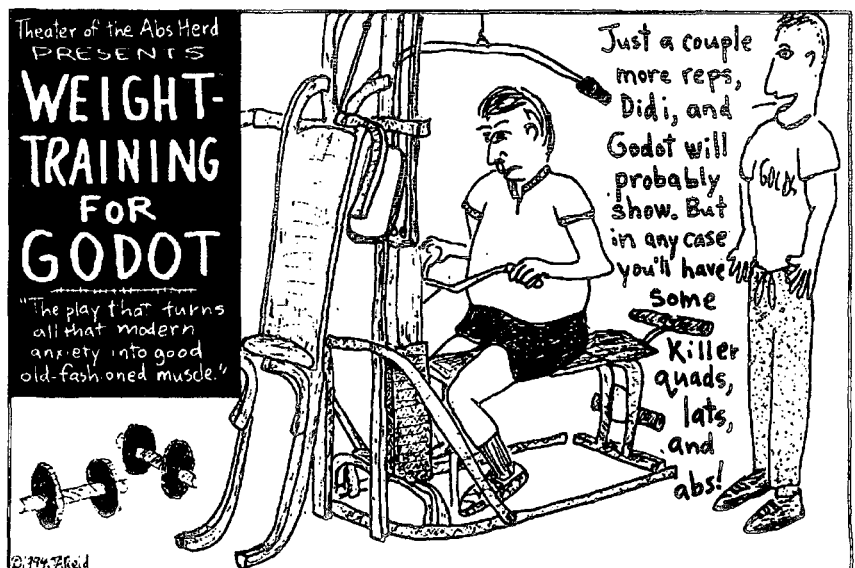
Old guard opponents oppose the dues increase, arguing that it will come at the expense of local unions (even though all local unions will also receive increased funds). They don't want the international to have enough money for Carey to implement his programs.

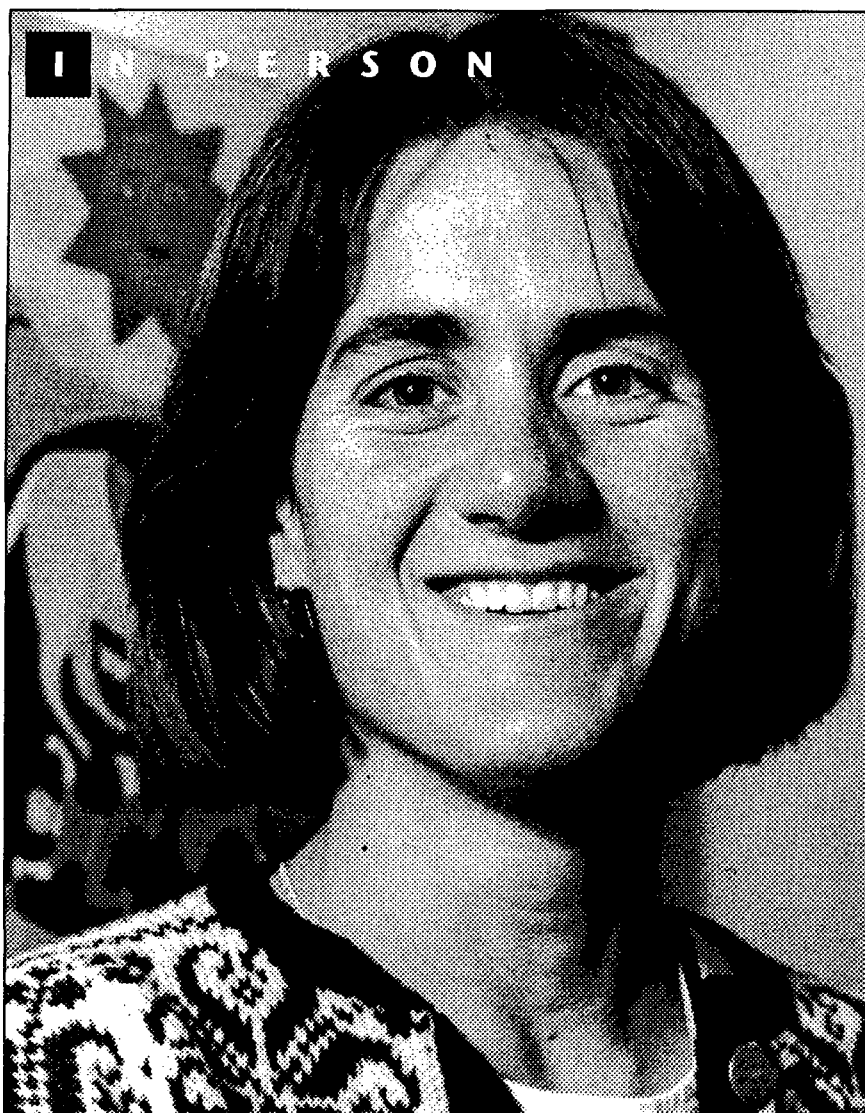
Union members never like dues increases, and many Teamsters still see extravagance at the regional levels of bureaucracy that may sour them on voting for Carey's proposal. Yet enough Teamsters may identify with Carey's more combative policies to overcome the odds against the referendum. "There is no plan B," said the union's communications director Matt Witt. "It's not clear what can be done if [the referendum] goes down."

—David Moberg

ROUGH CUTS

By JA Reid





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HEART ART

A palette of tradition and change for Costa Rican women

Union's 53 families living on a verdant hillside, where monkeys screeched from the nearby virgin forest and parrots flew overhead in flocks. The tin-roofed houses bordered small plots of individually owned land, on which the men harvested bananas, yucca and pineapple for export, taking several hours off in the afternoon to run errands and take care of village business.

As in other villages, the dirt paths that make up the town's thoroughfares were devoid of women. "Women are expected to stay at home to wash clothes and cook," says Hart. "It's considered loose behavior for a woman to be walking around the village."

These attitudes, according to Hart, are slow to change, but a visitor to La Union today is likely to find eight tenacious women strolling through the village with paintbrushes in hand or carrying their freshly dried paintings to the main road, where—to some men's horror—they'll catch a bus to San Jose for an art lesson. These are members of *Corazones Valientes*, Costa Rica's pre-

Rebecca Hart arrived in the Costa Rican village of La Union de Monterrey in the spring of 1990 on horseback. Twenty-five years old and freshly inducted as a Peace Corps volunteer in community development, Hart found La

ETC.

By Miles Harvey

Salvadoran elections

Voters in El Salvador go to the polls March 20 for the first elections since the 1992 peace accords ended 12 years of civil war. Much is at stake. Salvadoreans will not only be choosing a president and vice president, but also all 84 members of the Legislative Assembly and the city councils of 262 municipalities.

This vote marks the entrance of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), the former rebel group, into electoral politics. The left-leaning FMLN had openly attempted to sabotage votes held during the civil war, claiming that the government was only creating the illusion of democracy in order to provide legitimacy for U.S. aid. In the presidential race this time, the FMLN is supporting Ruben Zamora, the candidate of a left party called the Democratic Convergence. The FMLN will run its own candidates for the Legislative Assembly.

But the FMLN may have a tough time facing off against ARENA—the ruling party with ties to the late death squad leader Roberto D'Aubuisson—and the Christian Democratic Party, which governed El Salvador from 1984 to 1989. "[I]t is evident that there is not a level playing field" for the upcoming vote, according to a new report authored by George Vickers of the Washington Office on Latin American and Jack Spence of Hemisphere Initiatives.

"The left opposition is entering an electoral terrain that is unfamiliar," write Spence and Vickers. "Relative to their main

opposition, they lack experience, human resources and money for entering the campaign."

Spence and Vickers are also concerned about the voter registration process. Because of the nation's complex registration system, as many as 780,000 eligible citizens were without voting cards as of last July, according to a U.N. study. This total amounts to more votes than the sum of those gained by the two leading parties in the 1991 election. Spence and Vickers report that, as of the end of December, only 200,000 of those 780,000 people had received voter cards.

But according to Spence and Vickers, political intimidation is "the chief issue to watch in this election." A number of FMLN leaders have been killed in recent months, bringing the total of FMLN members murdered since the peace accord signing to 28, according to the the media watchdog publication *Lies of Our Times*.

As Spence and Vickers argue, "[I]t is hard to believe that by pure coincidence ... high-level political leaders of one party were victims of random crime."

Washington—which spent millions of dollars trying to wipe out the rebels during the '80s—has officially condemned the killings. But as Mike Zielinski points out in *Lies of Our Times*, "U.S. actions have sent a different signal—a signal undetected by the press. The period of heightened death squad activity coincides with joint military exercises involving up to 450 U.S. troops training Salvadoran armed forces in 'civic action.' "

mier folk art cooperative for women.

In a country touted for its exportables—namely coffee and bananas—and not its culture, the goal of *Corazones Valientes* is to create art true to village life. "Folk art is impressionistic; it hasn't been filtered through too many critical layers," says Hart, who helped to found the group. "The women have used painting to reaffirm themselves and their culture, especially during a time when a lot is changing."

In La Union, Hart offered a drawing class to 12 women, ages 15 to 35. Meeting once a week in an abandoned building near the village's center, the women moved quickly from drawing to painting, deciding then to form a cooperative through which they could sell their works and share materials. In the fall of 1992, they christened themselves *Corazones Valientes*, or "valiant hearts."

An artist herself, Hart traveled monthly with the women's paintings to San Jose, where a pair of well-known Costa Rican folk artists offered feedback on the art and gave her tips on teaching traditional design. They encouraged the women in La Union to paint autobiographically, rather than to reproduce the "knick-knack art" commonly sold in San Jose's tourist markets.

The women of *Corazones Valientes* warmed to the idea of using their everyday experiences as subjects for their painting, resulting in work that depicts customary village scenes in an unusual panoply of color. The paintings are peopled with villagers, and bear titles that read like chapters in a Costa Rican family album: "An Afternoon with a Family in their Home," "The Funeral," and "Encountering a Fierce Dog while Looking for a Good Pineapple."

Other paintings address the creep of First World products into the developing nation. One young artist portrays a sleepy ocean whose backdrop is an urban sprawl of high-rises and crashing cars. Another woman puts into paint her dream of owning a car. Hart notes the paradox: "On one hand, the people of La Union are seeking to preserve traditional agrarian culture, but on the other, they want to buy televisions."

It was not long before the fledgling artists were lining up at the bus stop with their paintings, ready to make the four-hour trip—the first ever for some of them—to San Jose.

This raised a few eyebrows among the men. "They didn't like it at all. Not only did it mean their women were on the streets, but it meant they also had to get up at 3 a.m. to do the day's cooking, cleaning and laundry before the bus came," says Hart.

Hart returned to the United States in 1992 and has since arranged for *Corazones Valientes* exhibitions in Minnesota and New York, while in Costa Rica, the women artists negotiate the sale of their paintings in San Jose. Now enrolled in Yale's graduate program in public health, the 29-year-old Hart runs the U.S. end of the business from her dorm room. She frames and distributes new paintings that arrive regularly from La Union to galleries, shops and individual buyers, with 100 percent of the net profit sent to La Union. In two years, upward of \$5,000 in proceeds has gone to materials, art lessons, and toward supporting the village when crops are weak. Hart reports that the women are buying shoes for their children, tending to previously ignored health problems, and enjoying a new political and economic rank in the village. Plans are under way to build a workshop for the group.

And when Hart returned to La Union for a visit last spring, she found that the men had changed their tune. "They said to me, 'Rebecca, you have to help us. Those women won't let us in their group!'"

—Sara Corbett

For more information on *Corazones Valientes*, call (203) 436-0003.

THE FIRST STONE

SEX AND TOXICS

By Joel Bleifuss

Hermaphroditic herring gulls fly over Lake Ontario, never to reproduce. Male alligators in Florida try to mate but cannot; their penises are too small. Male panthers in Florida, whose undescended testicles make reproduction difficult, move closer to extinction. In Taiwan, some 15-year-old boys are coming to grips with the fact that they will live life with abnormally small penises. British and American parents of sons born with undescended testicles discover that the incidence of this deformity has more than doubled in the last 40 years. Men in industrialized countries today find that have a sperm count that is half what their grandfathers had 50 years ago—a trend that, if it continues at the current rate, indicates that by the year 2020 humans in industrialized countries will have trouble reproducing themselves.

These are just some of the signs that the reproductive systems of humans and animals are seriously out of kilter.

Certain cancers, meanwhile, are becoming epidemic. Since 1950, the number of cancers that strike Americans has increased by 44 percent. This year, about 1 million people will be diagnosed with cancer and about 500,000 people will die of the disease. In the past 34 years, women in the United States have seen their risk of getting breast cancer more than double. Statistically, one in eight will get breast cancer. The disease kills 46,000 American women each year.

Do these biological malfunctions have anything in common? It appears that they do. They all may be linked to a group of pesticides and chemicals that mimic the female hormone estrogen in the bodies of humans and other animals. This group includes the heavy metals lead, mercury and cadmium. It also includes chlorinated compounds such as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and dioxin, as well as DDT, 2,4-D and 33 other pesticides. (See story on page 26.)

Peter Montague, editor of *Rachel's Hazardous Waste News*, explains that minute quantities of these chemicals mimic the function of natural hormones and wreak havoc with the network of glands, tissues and cells known as the

endocrine system. These hormone mimickers insinuate themselves into cells in the same way a hormone would, and from that vantage interfere with the biological switches that regulate growth, development and behavior. The body self-regulates its own hormones, but it cannot do the same for foreign chemicals that act like hormones. Fetuses and children whose bodies are still developing are especially susceptible to these "endocrine-disruptors." And overall, the reproductive system appears to be particularly vulnerable.

Environmental scientists have been aware of the danger for some time. In 1991, a group of 21 scientists gathered in Racine, Wis., for a conference organized

by one of the pioneers in this field, Theo Colborn of the World Wildlife Fund. The scientists issued a statement titled, "Chemically Induced Alterations in Sexual Development: The Wildlife/Human Connection." It read in part: "Unless the environmental load of synthetic hormone disruptors is abated and controlled, large-scale dysfunction at the population level is possible. The scope and potential hazard to wildlife and humans are great because of the probability of repeated and/or constant exposure to numerous synthetic chemicals that are known to be endocrine-disruptors."

The wider scientific community is beginning to recognize the dangers posed by this new class of environmental pollutants. In January, 300 scientists gathered at a National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) conference to exchange research on endocrine-disruptors.

In a study published last fall by the NIEHS, Colborn identified 10 chemicals and 35 pesticides as endocrine-disruptors, some of which are mentioned above. She writes: "Large numbers and large quantities of endocrine-disrupting chemicals have been released into the environment since World War II. Many of these chemicals can disturb the development of the endocrine system ... in organisms indirectly exposed during prenatal and/or early postnatal life." Colborn adds that the "effects of exposure during development are permanent and irreversible."

According to Colborn, endocrine-disruptors pose health risks similar to those of the artificial estrogen DES. In the '40s, '50s and '60s, DES was commonly given to women to prevent miscarriages and/or insure a healthy pregnancy. DES is now known to cause a rare form of vaginal cancer in the daughters of women who took the drug. It also causes abnormalities of the reproductive system in both daughters and sons, as well as an increase in breast cancer in the mothers.

Colborn writes, "It is now suspected that increases in the incidence of numerous pathologies in men and women may be related to exposure to pesticides and other endocrine-disrupting chemicals that can mimic DES."

We humans have been exposed to almost all of these endocrine-disruptors in the form of environmental pollution. Let's consider a few.

Lead: This poisonous metal has been around a long time. Some researchers have hypothesized that ancient Rome fell because the ruling classes, having poisoned themselves by storing wine in lead-lined containers, were unable to successfully reproduce. Today, the American Academy of Pediatrics estimates that 2 to 4 million American children have ingested enough lead to lower their IQ.

PCBs: Made from petrochemicals, PCBs conduct heat but not electricity. They dissolve in fat, but not in water. For those reasons they were commonly used to insulate electrical equipment. But they are also deadly poisons that accumulate in the body.

Pregnant women in Taiwan who ate PCB-contaminated oil in 1979 gave birth to children who are suffering a variety of medical problems, including abnormally small penises. According to Colborn, at least 5 percent, possibly more, of nursing mothers in the United States produce breast milk contaminated with enough PCBs to cause neurological damage in their infants. There also appears to be a relationship between PCBs in men with fertility problems and the inability of their sperm to "swim."

Chlorinated-hydrocarbon pesticides: Each year in the United States, about 3 billion pounds of pesticides are used to kill bugs and weeds. We all eat pesticides along with our food, and many of the pesticides we eat have never been thoroughly tested in a laboratory.

We do know that 71 pesticides allowed in food and in the environment can cause cancer. Laboratory tests also show that some pesticides damage the immune system. Among the most dangerous pesticides are those made from chlorinated compounds that act as endocrine-disruptors.

Pesticides don't only turn up as residue on the food we eat. Of those communities that draw their water from wells, one in 10 draw it from wells contaminated with pesticide poisons. The director of the EPA's pesticide program in the Reagan administration, Steve Schatzow, put it this way: "Pesticides dwarf the other environmental risks the agency deals with. Toxic waste dumps may affect a few thousand people who live around them. But virtually everyone is exposed to pesticides."

An April 1993 study published in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* reported that there is a link between breast cancer in women and

their blood levels of the organochlorine pesticide DDT—an endocrine-disruptor. Researcher Mary Wolff writes, "Given the worldwide dissemination of organochlorine insecticides in the environment and the food chain, the implications are far-reaching for public health intervention worldwide."

Children appear to be especially susceptible. A statistically significant link has been discovered between brain cancer in children and the use of pesticides in the home. And according to the National Cancer Institute, between 1979 and 1988 brain cancer in children under 14 increased 47 percent.

What can be done?

Jay Feldman, executive director of the National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides, believes it is time to declare war against environmental contaminants—and the legislators who allow this pollution of our bodies to continue.

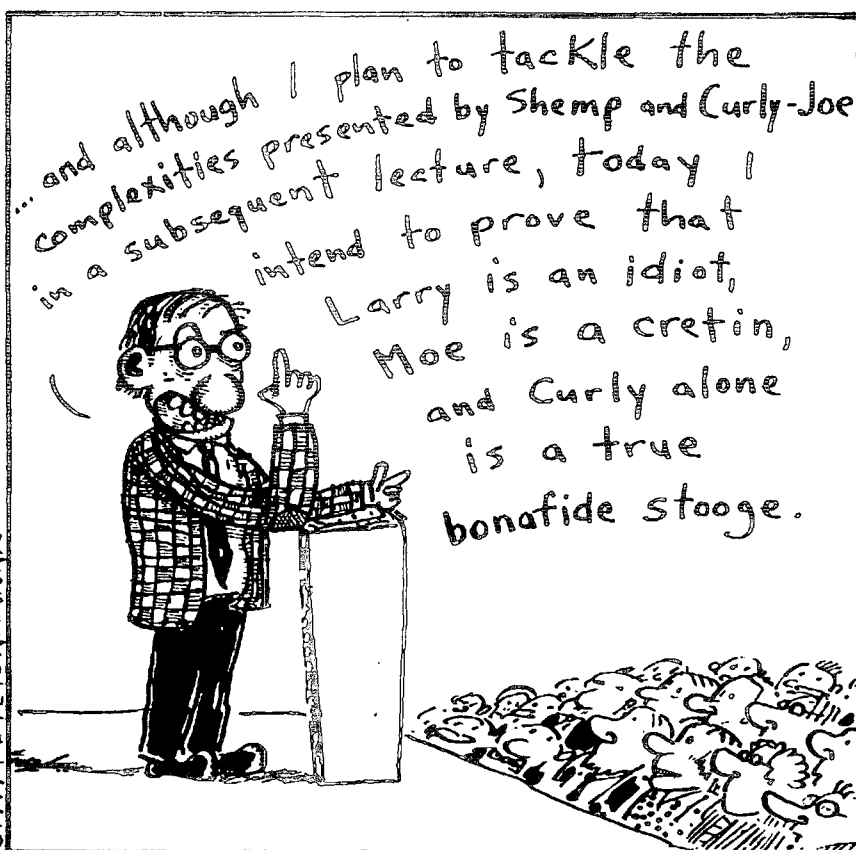
"We have elevated rates of cancer," says Feldman. "We ought to be waging a war against these chemicals, identifying where adverse effects are seen and in a very deliberate and aggressive way removing them from the market."

Is the Clinton administration up to the job?

Find out in our next issue when *In These Times* visits with Lois Gibbs of the Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes—and examines the administration's current proposal to deregulate pesticides.

THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

by Peter Hannan



THE POLITICS OF

PORN

Shameful pleasures

A

nyone searching the newsstands for political opinions veering even slightly from the mainstream may find the task frustrating. Yet most of these same newsstands carry an astonishing variety of pornographic magazines, appealing to the most specialized tastes. The audience for pornography, though, has been a strangely silent one. Despite the ubiquity of pornographic magazines and videos, we still know little about who consumes them, and why, and what they make of them.

The traditional taboos

Why we say so little when we talk about pornography.

By David Futrelle

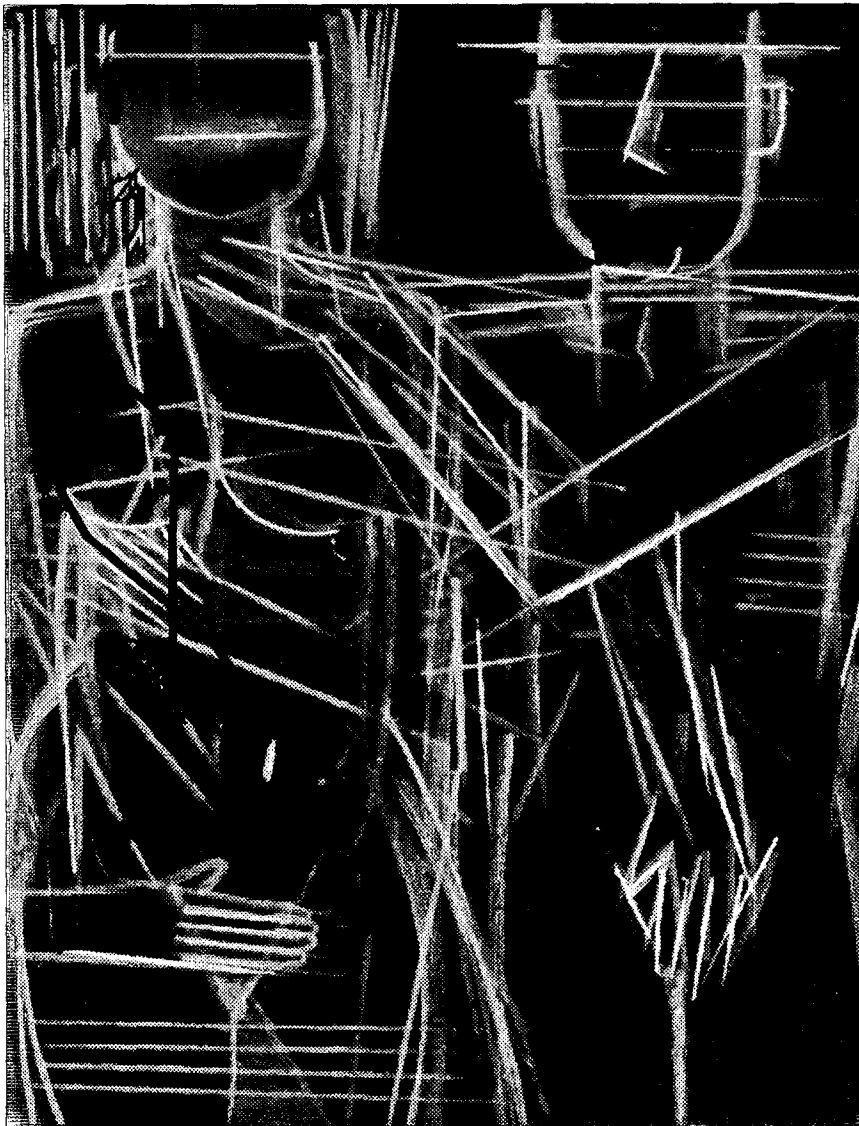
surrounding pornography, as anthropologist Bernard Arcand has observed, have “shifted from the spectacle to the spectator; pornographic sex is entirely out in the open and visible to anyone, and yet there is nothing much we can say about the people who watch it”—largely because they say so little of themselves. “We can only marvel that pornography has survived and is still tolerated,” Arcand notes, “given that it has been so universally condemned; indeed, it is really only talked about when it is being attacked.”

It is not that we do not talk about sex; we talk about it incessantly, even compulsively. But we rarely talk about it honestly. “People are in general not candid over sexual matters,” Freud once aptly noted. “They do not show their sexuality freely, but to conceal it they wear a heavy overcoat woven of a tissue of lies, as though the weather were bad in the world of sexuality.” And so the discussion of pornography, like the discussion of sexuality in general, is constrained as much by internal as by external censors.

Some profess to be above it all; to consider talk of pornography “boring” or simply distasteful. Others don’t like speaking of it unless they can disguise their desires as a kind of (im)moral heroism, unless they can present their preferred brand of pornography as a transgressive assault on conventional (and presumably hypocritical) morality. Since the transgressive rhetoric of the sexual revolution has, by and large, run out of steam—Madonna’s extravagantly naughty *Sex* book aroused mainly yawns—many have simply fallen silent, or have fallen into an evasive euphemism.

For many men, in particular, to admit to the use of (or even a taste for) pornography is to admit to a kind of sexual failure: porn is seen as an immature, adolescent fallback for those who cannot find a more “normal” sexual outlet. Men are less afraid of seeming insensitive than they are of seeming pathetic and perverse. It is hard not to come to the conclusion, as Arcand has suggested, that the reticence of most men on the subject of pornography—the unwillingness to admit that they are anything other than bored or dismayed by porn—is itself part of the problem, that these men by

Debates over sexuality are by their nature contentious. But few debates have been quite as charged as the feminist debate over pornography. Some in the feminist camp, most prominently, writer Andrea Dworkin and legal scholar Catharine MacKinnon, have argued that the only possible feminist position on pornography is one of opposition—that pornography is nothing more or less than the “graphic, sexually explicit subordination of women.” In fact, this rhetoric obscures very real differences among feminists about the social and political meanings of pornography—differences that are explored in some detail in the essays that follow. David Futrelle examines the ways in which serious discussions of the subject have been obscured by shame and fear; Leora Tanenbaum scrutinizes the contention of anti-pornography feminists that women are abused during the production of pornography; David McCabe argues that misogynistic pornography is potentially more harmful to the liberties of women than are efforts to ban it; Leanne Katz, executive director of the National Coalition Against Censorship, argues that women and other oppressed groups are hurt the most when ideas and images are restricted; and sex expert and cultural commentator Susie Bright takes on Catharine MacKinnon’s anti-sex crusade.



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their silence “are adding to the shyness that surrounds sex, and to the traditional taboo, the shameful of pleasure itself.”

Those who have continued talking most fervently about pornography have been the censors and the censorious. In recent years, in the debate over pornography and in discussions of sexuality in general, the language of sexual transgression has been overshadowed by a new kind of sexual language—a language deriving from a peculiar mix of feminist rhetoric and legalistic discourse, a language playing on fears and promising a certain kind of control. Pioneered by anti-pornography feminists Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon, this new discourse describes sexuality as an arena not of pleasure (or of heroic transgression), but as an arena of exploitation, dangerous and destructive for women to enter.

In this climate, the debate over pornography has become precariously polarized. On one side of the debate we find Dworkin and MacKinnon, speaking with a trumped-up rhetoric carefully designed to encourage silence among its

opponents. On the other side we find an odd and contradictory coalition: a few disreputable pornographers, clinging uneasily to the increasingly hackneyed language of sexual transgression; a few sexual rebels and sex-positive feminists, attempting to disentangle the pleasures of porn from the perils of patriarchy; and a motley collection of civil libertarians, who would be much happier if they didn't have to discuss the issue at all.

If pornography arouses among many of its defenders a deep shame, it elicits from many of its detractors an intense and protracted anger. Indeed, the most notable and influential of the anti-pornography writings—especially those of Andrea Dworkin—rely less upon logic than they do on the invocation of personal rage. Consider the following, from Dworkin's *Letters from a War Zone*: “For fun they rape us or have other men, or sometimes animals, rape us and film the rapes and show the rapes in movie theaters or publish them in magazines, and the normal men who are not pimps (who don't know, don't mean it) pay money to watch; and we are told that the pimps and the normal men are free citizens in a free society exercising rights and that we are prudes because this is sex and real women don't mind a little force and the women get paid anyway so what's the big deal?”

This is not the kind of argument that one can respond to with logic: as the title of Dworkin's book suggests, this is the language of *war*, designed not to encourage but to suppress debate. In a recent *Ms.* magazine roundtable discussion of porn, unofficially presided over by Dworkin herself (with the assistance of anti-porn organizer Norma Ramos), the discussion spirals inward toward an ever-narrower anti-porn orthodoxy; Dworkin patrols the margins, nudging and cajoling the two more independently minded participants (writers Ntozake Shange and Marilyn French) into retracting even the mildest criticism of her views. French—whose first-hand knowledge of the subject seems to derive entirely from one-time viewings of two pornographic films from the '70s—is an especially easy mark for Dworkin's intellectual bullying. Beginning the discussion by declaring her opposition to censorship (and suggesting that some pornography may even contain elements of beauty) she ends up supporting the Dworkin/MacKinnon anti-pornography “civil rights” ordinance. And so a discussion packaged as an attempt to open up debate on the subject narrows the boundaries still further.

The anti-pornography advocates are eager to exploit the

shame of their opponents; they're anything but reticent. Going beyond the original (already extreme) rhetoric of the early anti-pornography movement—"pornography is the theory, rape is the practice"—Dworkin and MacKinnon have upped the rhetorical ante even further, declaring frankly that pornography is itself rape. This is the central assertion (I hesitate to say argument) of MacKinnon's recent book, *Only Words*, a passionate rhetorical assault on porn. "Protecting pornography means protecting sexual abuse as speech," she writes, "at the same time that both pornography and its expression have deprived women of speech, especially speech against sexual abuse." (See story on page 40.)

MacKinnon simply elides the question of consent, implying that all pornographic sex (and perhaps most heterosexual intercourse) is somehow forced upon always unwilling, and always female, victims, for the benefit of sadistic (and always male) victimizers. There are, of course, a few empirical problems with this dramatic assertion: a great deal of porn is designed for gay men and involves no women at all; women (straight and gay) are frequent consumers of porn; some pornography is explicitly egalitarian, produced by and

for women. But there is, shall we say, a philosophical problem as well: MacKinnon looks upon female sexual desire with an uncomprehending condescension, assuming that all expressions of consent in sex are so defiled by sexual inequality that they don't count at all.

MacKinnon is as sloppy with her evidence as she is with her assumptions. She gestures vaguely at a small stack of "scientific" surveys to back up her startling conclusions, but provides no specific or systematic discussion of the evidence she claims is embedded in these reports, or (equally importantly) of the methodologies of this research. Relying in her rhetoric on a curious double negative, she argues that "[t]here is no evidence that pornography does no harm; not even courts equivocate over its carnage anymore."

The courts may not "equivocate," but researchers certainly do: studies of the effects of pornography are far more equivocal than MacKinnon claims. At worst, the studies are simply self-confirming; at best they're inconclusive. (See accompanying story.) MacKinnon and her supporters can cite studies "proving" that porn inspires rape and abuse; their opponents can find studies that "prove" opposite con-

Does pornography cause sexual abuse?

According to Andrea Dworkin, "The civil impact of pornography on women is staggering. It keeps us socially silent, it keeps us socially compliant ... It creates a vast hopelessness for women, a vast despair." Anti-pornography advocates often refer to scientific studies to back up such rhetorical claims, to attempt to prove a connection between the use of pornography and the abuse of women. The available studies, however, do not support such a straightforward conclusion.

• **Does pornography lead to sexual assault?** According to W.L. Marshall, up to one-third of all sexual offenders use pornography before (or during) their crimes. But a series of other studies indicate that sex offenders generally have had *less* exposure to pornography than most men, and that they often find sexual images more distressing than arousing. As most researchers have noted, family background matters much more than the amount of exposure to pornography. Sex offenders tend to come from families in which sexuality was rarely if ever discussed—and where, ironically, the reading of pornography was strongly discouraged. Even sociologist Diana Russell, a prominent anti-pornography spokesperson, notes that "pornography clearly does not cause rape, as it seems safe to assume that some unknown percentage of pornography consumers do not rape women, and that many rapes are unrelated to pornography."

• **Does pornography stimulate violence?** Some studies suggest so. But this may have more to do with the design of the studies than with the alleged intrinsic violence of porn: in one 1989 study, males exposed to pornography were more willing to come to the aid of a female subject who appeared to be hurt than were men exposed to other stimuli. Summarizing the work of researcher Dolf Zillman (often cited, if selectively, by anti-porn advocates), Alison King notes that his subjects tended to become aroused more by images they disliked than by those they found pleasing: "The material producing the greatest amount of aggression? An explicit film about an eye operation."

• **Is there a correlation between the availability of pornography and the rate of rape?** J. M. H. Court has suggested that stricter pornography laws do in fact lead to fewer rapes. But in Denmark, rape rates plunged after pornography laws were liberalized; in Japan, where pornography is widespread (and remarkably violent) the rate of rape is low. And we should remember that correlation does not mean cause: researcher J.E. Scott, oddly enough, has uncovered a strong correlation between rape rates and the sales of country sport magazines.

Psychologist Judith Becker, a dissenting member of the Meese Commission who has devoted her research career to studying sexual abuse and sexual violence, has concluded that "[p]ornography is an insignificant factor, if any factor at all, in the development of deviant behavior."

Concludes anthropologist Bernard Arcand: "[W]hat we do know about the effects of pornography can be easily summarized. We believe that the consumption of pornography stimulates the thalamus and the hypothalamus and perhaps even the neocortex, which in turn produces a modification of the endocrinal system. In short, the individual experiences emotion. We still do not know why this emotion leads one person to masturbate, another to become angry, a third to commit rape, and a fourth to go to sleep."

—D. F.



clusions. As Gore Vidal has suggested, the only thing pornography is known to cause directly is "the solitary act of masturbation." Vidal continues: "As for corruption, the only immediate victim is English prose."

Of course, such scientific studies are simply props in a larger drama, one that is as much psychological as political. Women attack pornography in part, feminist writer Ellen Willis has argued, to guard themselves against their own unruly desires. "Women's sexual experience is diverse and often contradictory," Willis argues. "Our most passionate convictions about sex do not necessarily reflect our real desires; they are as likely to be aimed at repressing the pain of desires we long ago decided were too dangerous to acknowledge, even to ourselves. If feminist theory is to be truly based in the reality of women's lives, feminists must examine their professed beliefs and feelings with as much skepticism as they apply to male pronouncements." After all, as Willis acutely notes, "the purpose of women's liberation is to liberate women, not [to] defend our superior capacity for abstinence."

To say this is not to advocate a return to the compulsive sexual libertarianism of the '70s. Sexuality (especially in the age of AIDS) is not without its dangers and complexities, which are as much emotional as physical. But we cannot safeguard ourselves against these dangers by denying the more complex (and sometimes darker) sides of our feelings altogether. Sexual liberation does not require that we act out all of our desires (or all of what we take to be our desires), but it does require that we acknowledge them.

To some degree this is already taking place. Indeed, it is clear that women are becoming more open about their desires. Certain kinds of soft-core erotica—romance novels and the like—have sold well to a nearly all-female audience for years. But women have begun to buy and use hard-core pornography—for themselves or to use with their partners—in greater and greater numbers. Researcher Linda Williams estimates that as much as 40 percent of the market for pornographic videos is female, and that one half of all women are regular users of porn. Indeed, while men

(straight men, in any case) are generally silent and secretive about their pornographic indulgences, the use of pornography by women still carries an aura of transgression, and a few women—such as Sallie Tisdale and Susie Bright—have been willing to defend the explicit pleasures of porn.

But for the most part pornography—for men and women alike—is a furtive pleasure. The shame runs deep—in part because pornography offers such a crude and limited kind of pleasure. If pornography could really give what it promised—intimacy without consequences—no one would ever want to escape its spell. But, like the "fast sex" of the '70s, the instant intimacy of pornography offers no real intimacy at all—but merely, as pornographer I. S. Levine suggests, "a hideout from the terrible demands of adulthood." Those who participate in the culture of pornography (whether as performers or as consumers and users) can indulge themselves, at least for a moment, in a return to the simple fantasies of their youth, lingering, Levine remarks, "in a state of overheated adolescent sexuality, the very place their personalities were formed, stuck where they discovered sex."

It makes no sense to deny such fantasies—or to rule them politically off-limits, as Dworkin and MacKinnon insist we must. True, the business itself is a seedy one: those advocates of pornography who speak of the genre only in terms of fantasy are being, in their own way, as intellectually dishonest as Dworkin and MacKinnon. But it is hard to see how further stigmatizing (or criminalizing) the industry could possibly make things better. Indeed, many of the worst aspects of the industry today derive directly from its outlaw status, from its links with the social and criminal underworld. The worst problems faced by those in the business are not those of "objectification" or the "fetishization of body parts"; they're the problems (faced to some degree by everyone who works) of poor working conditions, of the gross disparities in power between those who have the money to give and those who have to work to get it. Shame, like the threat of censorship, only makes matters worse. ◀

THE POLITICS OF PORN

Forced arguments

*Are women
coerced into the
porn industry?
Or does the
accusation
provide cover
for a broader
attack on
sexual
representation?*

By Leora Tanenbaum

If pornography is demeaning to women, then why do so many of them choose to enter the porn industry? To anti-porn feminists, the answer is simple: they don't. Since no one could possibly want to work in porn, the choice is made for them: they are coerced.

And, once there, these women are abused—or so anti-porn feminists allege. As Catharine MacKinnon has written memorably in her most recent book, *Only Words*: "In mainstream media, violence is done through special effects; in pornography, women shown being beaten and tortured report being beaten and tortured." But she goes beyond the simple cataloging of indictable offenses; for her, pornography itself is figured as a kind of abuse. Gloria Steinem has similarly argued: "Pornography is not about sex. It's about an imbalance of

male-female power that allows and even requires sex to be used as a form of aggression."

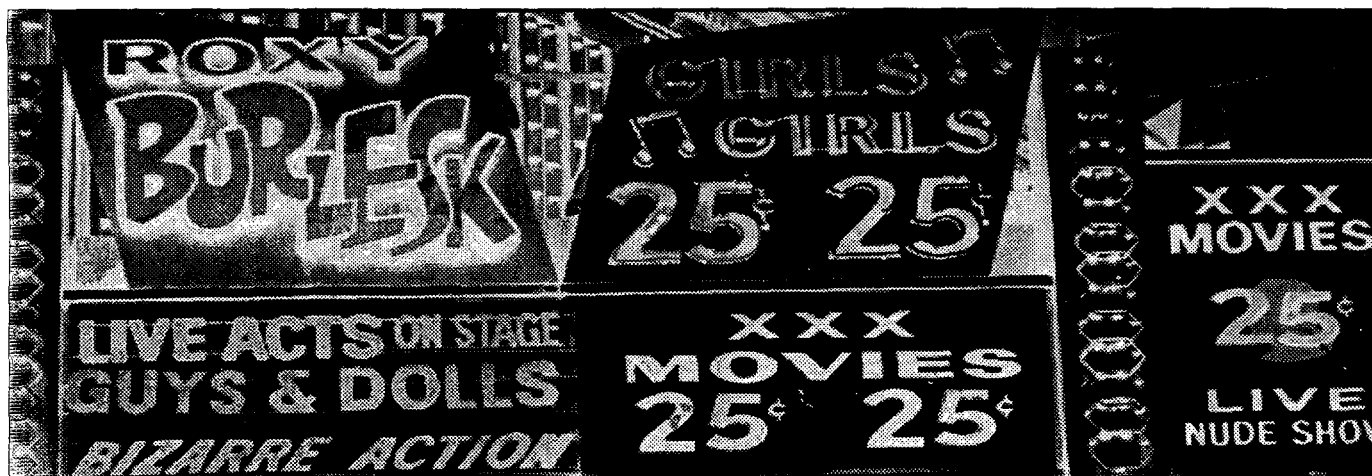
A more familiar accusation is that porn is dangerous because the men who consume it are incited to assault women. Numerous researchers have purported to demonstrate this link, but the studies reveal contradictory findings. "The fast-accumulating research on the effects of violent pornography is most notable only for its inconsistency," Lynne Segal writes in *Sex Exposed*. "Although many sex offenders do use pornography, in general ... they have had access to it at a later age than non sex-offenders, and are overwhelmingly more likely to have been punished for looking at it as teenagers."

The charge of coercion, by contrast, has wide resonance because it confirms pervasive stereotypes. And, of course, there are no social science studies that can refute the accusations of abuse in the production of porn: we who are outside the sex industry can rely only upon the reports of insiders.

Yet these narratives do not always describe lives of exploitation and degradation. Some porn performers, in fact, claim to find their work enjoyable and empowering, positioning themselves as political resistance fighters. Nina Hartley, for example, started stripping in San Francisco in 1983. Now, at 32, she is a porn star, with hundreds of films to her credit. She is proud of her job, and defends it in consciously feminist terms, explaining that the porn industry "provides a surprisingly flexible and supportive arena for me to grow in as a performer, both sexually and non-sexually." Hartley became convinced early on that "an intelligent, sexual woman could choose a job in the sex industry and not be a victim, but instead emerge even stronger and more self-confident, with a feeling, even, of self-actualization." And for her, this has been true.

Not all in the industry are quite so sanguine. I. S. Levine, writer and director of more than 150 pornographic movies, chides Hartley for presenting a too-rosy picture of an industry he knows well. "Nina gets up there with a baseball bat ready to take on anyone with anything bad to say about the X-rated business, but it gets in the way of the truth, which is both more interesting and more useful," he told researcher Robert Stoller. "The public's idea about this industry is probably not far removed from the kind of industry it is: exploitative, with marginal personalities who can't integrate into society, self-destructive people living self-destructive lives."

It is no accident, certainly, that the women who choose jobs in the sex industry *are* often victims of some kind—of incest, drug addiction, poverty, low self-esteem, feelings of powerlessness. But does pornography *cause* their victimization? According to anti-porn feminists, these women would



otherwise pursue mainstream jobs if they were not sucked into a misogynistic industry and kept there through abuse.

The most celebrated account of sexual coercion during the filming of an X-rated movie has been provided by Linda Lovelace (now Marchiano), the star of 1972's *Deep Throat*. Her 1980 autobiography, *Ordeal*, tells a harrowing story of daily torture. Marchiano was routinely raped, beaten, kicked and choked. She was forced to have sex with a dog for a low-budget porn movie; when she protested, she was told, "You make this movie or you're going to die."

But it was Marchiano's husband, Chuck Traynor, who abused her—not the pornographers. Traynor forced her to have sex with clients he solicited, beating her and pointing a gun at her head when she struggled. In order to increase her value as a prostitute, Traynor hypnotized her and taught her "deep throating," an oral sex technique based on his knowledge of sword-swallowing. She wasn't allowed to call or visit her parents; she wasn't even allowed to go to the bathroom or to sleep without Traynor's permission.

In fact, Marchiano's career as a porn star helped her to escape, at least temporarily, from the brutality of her husband. In *Ordeal*, she describes the sense of freedom she felt on the set of *Deep Throat*. She enjoyed the company of her co-star, Harry Reems. "Something was happening to me, something strange," she wrote. "No one was treating me like garbage. ... We laughed a lot that first day of shooting. ... And no one was asking me to do anything I didn't want to do." No one, that is, but her husband—who was so threatened by his wife's evident enjoyment that he brutally beat her after the first day of shooting, throwing her against their hotel room wall and kicking her for hours until he was too tired to continue.

Feminists against pornography have deliberately misinterpreted *Ordeal*, twisting its facts to suit their agenda. They hold up Marchiano's story as proof *par excellence* of the abusive working conditions within the porn industry. MacKinnon uses Marchiano's life story to serve her own faulty logic: "If a woman had to be coerced to make *Deep Throat*, doesn't that suggest that *Deep Throat* is dangerous to all women anywhere near a man who wants to do what

he saw in it?" (Well, no.) And Andrea Dworkin asks in *Ms.* magazine's recent roundtable discussion on pornography: "Why did a woman have to be brutalized to make that film?" The answer is: she didn't. *Ordeal* makes this clear.

In the years following the publication of *Ordeal*, though, Marchiano has been all too willing to accommodate her anti-porn sisters. When she appeared on *Geraldo* in 1988, Marchiano spoke of her experience working on *Deep Throat* in the passive voice, obfuscating the source of her coercion: "I was beaten and I was forced into it, and I had a .45 pointed at me, an M-16 semiautomatic machine gun," she told the audience. "I was beaten on a daily basis, the threats—constant threats on the lives of my parents and my family and friends, and my life. ... I was raped in that movie." Not once did she mention that the abuser was her husband.

Candida Royalle, who starred in over a dozen X-rated movies in the '70s before she became a director of alternative porn in the '80s, knows that there are loathsome people in the industry, and that it can feel dirty and shameful to work for them. She also admits that many of the women who do porn work lack self-esteem and economic resources.

But coercion? That's a different story. The only places Royalle ever faced sexual harassment were in "straight" jobs. When she was 17, working as a receptionist at a health club in New York, she was sexually assaulted by her boss. At 19, when she worked at Ticketron, her employer made her kiss him good night every night in order to keep her job.

"I was never forced to do anything in pornography," she told me. "The closest I ever came to any attempt at coercion was during a film I made with a very famous director, about a guy who had abused prostitutes, who were now getting back at him. The women were all supposed to stand on him and urinate on him. So the director was passing out beers. I was like, What is this? 'This is the, uh, urination scene.' I was like, Excuse me? I not only refused to do it, I organized all the other women and said, 'We're not going to do anything we don't want to do.' Four of the women did agree because they had no problem with it, but the rest of us didn't. The director was very angry, and said I would never

work for him again, and that was fine."

Royalle is critical of those feminists who want to "protect" women like her. "I understand their desire to help women, but they are out of touch with women in the industry," she told me. "You go out and talk to most of the women in California, and they would say, 'How dare you tell me I can't do this. How dare you threaten to take away an income for work that I enjoy doing.'"

Women are indeed exploited in the porn industry, she notes, "because we are absolutely necessary for the production, yet our sexuality is completely ignored." Royalle does not consider pornography dangerous or horrible—but she is insulted by most of what she sees.

So she has taken control of the way women's sexuality is represented in porn. Her downtown Manhattan production company, Femme, creates and distributes sexually explicit films geared to women and heterosexual couples. Royalle's work is different from the mainstream. Her movies never jump right into the sex; Royalle prefers instead to create suspense. "I want to tell men and women: wait a minute, slow down, there is so much beautiful stuff you're racing past." She portrays strong, assertive female characters—and men who aren't intimidated by them. In an effort to depict egalitarian sex, she is careful never to show force or violence, and the one bondage scene she has shot, in *Three Daughters* (1986), is so sensitively consensual as to be, she laughs, "milk toast."

But when Royalle debated two women from the Canadi-

an censor board, one of them accused her of promoting violence against women with the *Three Daughters* scene. The government subsequently made her eliminate that sequence from the Canadian version of the movie. "And I find that very damaging to people's sexuality," Royalle laments. "It drives home a terrible message: that I am sick for having that fantasy."

It is clear, then, that the charge of violence and coercion is just a cover: the central concern of the anti-porn feminists is sex, not sexism, and the real target is sexual representation of *any kind*. No wonder they focus on sexually explicit materials, even though other media are equally, if not more, sexist.

As long as there are poor women, there will be sex work, and this work will be degrading mainly to the extent that the women entering the profession are desperate. Even Nina Hartley admits, in a self-reflective moment, that "the concept of 'choice' depends a lot on one's class background and many sex workers (as with workers in all fields) might desire to make their living in other ways if there were real options available." Would feminists against pornography contentedly pack up their petitions and megaphones, I wonder, if porn actresses left the business to work as domestic servants and burger-flippers? Anti-pornography organizers would do better to focus their efforts on changing the conditions that force economically deprived people to take degrading jobs in the first place.

Leora Tanenbaum is a regular contributor to *In These Times*.

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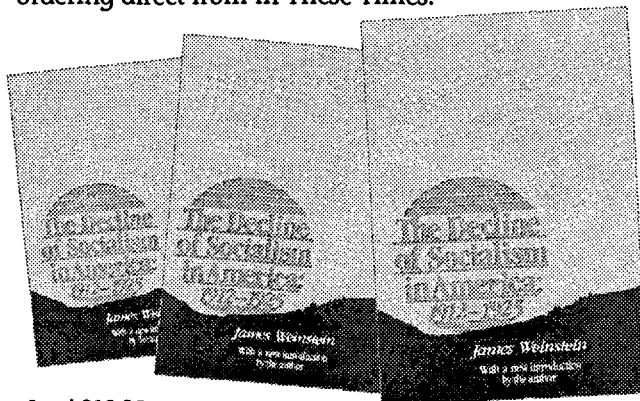
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Photo by David Schulz

THE POLITICS OF PORN

Not-so-strange bedfellows

*Feminist
theory helps
to clarify
the moral
argument
against
pornography.*

By David McCabe

Perhaps the sole indisputable fact about pornography is that it has occasioned a seemingly unlikely alliance between conservative Republicans and radical feminists. Commentary on this unusual coalition consists mostly of tired reflections on the strange bedfellows politics makes, with little serious analysis of the dynamics linking these groups. The general view seems to be that this alignment of forces is simply the result of an unusual set of circumstances. This interpretation is understandable; it is, after all, hard to imagine that figures like Andrea Dworkin and Jesse Helms have anything in common beyond a shared wish to see pornography disappear.

But there are deeper

connections between the ideologies of the two groups. The feminist critique is less radical than it might at first appear. In some ways it offers a continuation of, and improvement on, a conservative argument many decades old.

Most conservative objections to pornography, to be sure, stem from the notion that sex is basically a messy activity, proper only for married couples, which should be neither discussed nor thought about much. But in addition to this impoverished conservatism, there is a more reasonable and potentially more powerful conservative argument, put forth by the British jurist Patrick Devlin, that merits closer attention.

Devlin's claim is that any society has a legitimate right to protect itself against threats to its structure; since part of that structure is a shared morality, whatever threatens that moral structure is a legitimate object of legislation. Society may thus outlaw behavior that deviates from its shared morality for the same reason that it may prosecute treason; in each case it is acting to protect itself. And because society is acting in self-defense "there are no theoretical limits to legislation against immorality." Any immoral action may be outlawed if society agrees that

it would inspire in the "right-minded person" intolerance, indignation and disgust. Judgments in these matters, asserts Devlin, are not susceptible to logical argument; instead, they are a matter of "real feeling."

Liberals responding to Devlin have quite rightly criticized his willingness to dismiss the role of logical argument in justifying moral judgments and his enthronement of feeling as the final arbiter of society's morality. A gut "feeling" of revulsion at an activity is simply not by itself legitimate grounds to restrict that activity. The danger of Devlin's argument is that mere assertions of feeling and ungrounded assertions of distaste take the place of moral reasoning.

There are, then, two chief failings in conservative arguments against pornography: either they simply assume the value of a community's moral standards without making the case for them (as in Devlin's case), or they rely on moral standards (e.g., a puritanical approach to sexuality) that are largely unpersuasive today.

But these failings are not insurmountable. The great promise of the feminist critique of pornography is that, unlike the conservative arguments, it makes clear both the intrinsic value of the standards violated by pornography and the damage to society caused by violating those standards.

Central to the feminist critique is the distinction between erotica and pornography. Erotica, feminists argue, portrays sexual acts by participants who engage as

equals and who are capable of equal enjoyment. Pornography, by contrast, presents women as sexual objects who exist primarily to be manipulated by men in order to satisfy male desires for domination and sexual fulfillment. On this view, the distinguishing characteristic of pornography is not its explicit sexual content but is instead, to quote the 1970 U.S. Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, "the degrading and demeaning portrayal of the role and status of the human female."

Now, the fact that pornography expresses a morally repellent attitude may be cause to dislike it, but it is not by itself a reason to ban it. Our First Amendment, after all, guarantees the liberty to express even abhorrent views. But even John Stuart Mill, close to an absolutist in his defense of free expression, allowed that when the expression of an opinion constitutes "a positive instigation to some mischievous act," such expression could be curtailed.

Feminist critics see pornography as just this kind of expression. Accordingly, they argue for restricting pornography on the grounds that it leads directly to harm against women by contributing to a social environment in which women are systematically denied equal status, and because it inspires attitudes that encourage a broad range of crimes against women.

The feminist critique thus fills the central gap in Devlin's argument: the lack of a clear explanation of why certain moral ideals deserve protection. Feminists argue that by violating the moral ideals of equal respect, equal opportunity and equal freedom, pornography leads to harm against one half of the population.

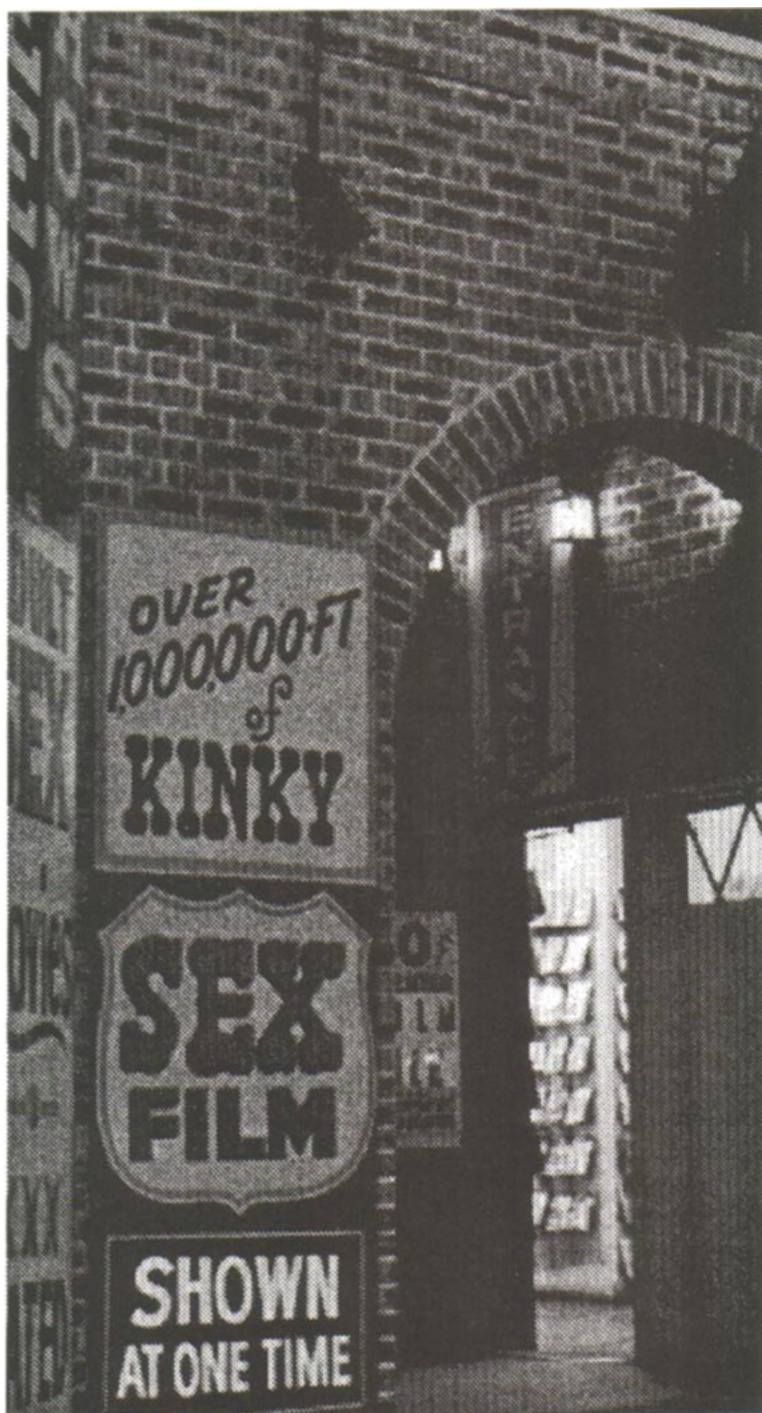
Some would respond that the state ought to remain neutral with regard to all moral values and simply attempt to secure as much individual liberty as possible. But indiscriminately maximizing liberty would lead to chaos, given the conflicting claims that would inevitably arise. For this reason the state cannot avoid ranking some liberties ahead of others, and doing this requires assessing the relative value of the activities requiring these liberties.

It follows, then, that if pornography does in fact deny women equal opportunities for autonomous lives, the state can legitimately outlaw it on the grounds that the infringement of the liberties of women in a society tolerating pornography is far worse than the loss of liberty that would result if society banned it.

To be sure, there are large (and perhaps insuperable) difficulties that would plague any attempt to give legal force to the feminist critique. To name just two: studies probing the link between pornography and aggression toward women seem at this point inconclusive, and the task of codifying the dis-

inction between erotica and pornography poses an enormous challenge. Because serious objections like these remain unresolved, it is not clear that greater restrictions against pornography would be wise. The work that remains to be done is not philosophical; it involves difficult empirical and sociological research to resolve the dilemmas above. But it is clear that the insights provided by feminism have helped to clarify a principled position from which to challenge pornography. ◀

David McCabe, a graduate student in philosophy at Northwestern University, is a frequent contributor to *Commonweal*.



THE POLITICS OF PORN

In the realm of the censors

*Women face a
bigger threat
from the
repression of
sexually
explicit
material
than from its
expression.*

By Leanne Katz

The intense battles around the control of sexuality have always been fought on the terrain of women's bodies. Women have long been barred from access to knowledge and information and excluded even from viewing or creating representations of their own bodies. And now, just when feminism has scored at least a few victories in these arenas, we must contend with a group of feminists who would take us back—way back—by enlisting the power of the state to suppress sexually explicit images and words.

A pro-censorship campaign was thwarted in 1986 when the Supreme Court declared Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon's "model" anti-pornography ordinance to be unconstitutional. The proposed ordinance met with vehement objection from an extraordinary array of feminists—

who are incredulous that this untenable legislation is not only being proposed again, but that it has been taken seriously in its new incarnation by *Ms.* magazine.

A great number of feminists see old-fashioned censorship in the "new" theories put forth to justify the suppression of "pornography." They are astonished that some view these "new" theories as progressive, when they are in fact deeply reactionary—that is, reminiscent of traditional efforts to control women's bodies, women's sexuality and women's lives. Pro-speech feminists are speaking out, writing articles, publishing books, holding conferences. Yet the mainstream media continue to promote the myth that suppression of "pornography" is a feminist tenet—suggesting that opposition to anti-pornography campaigns comes from free speech enthusiasts but not from feminists.

This misleading press coverage lends force to the name-calling tactics of anti-porn feminists against feminists who oppose them. We are charged with being manipulated by "pimps," controlled by pornographers, indifferent to violence against women, Uncle Toms of the patriarchy. It is apparently unthinkable that one might care about women and therefore oppose censorship. These tactics not only intimidate many women but they also serve to limit debate on these issues of public importance.

Feminist opposition to anti-pornography campaigns arises from many different and fascinating perspectives—political, sexual, philosophical, literary, psychological, legal, artistic. Pro-speech feminists have varied interests, experiences and views regarding sexuality and its representation, but agree that censorship is dangerous for women.

The term "pornography" is frequently—and incorrectly—used as though its meaning has a widely accepted understanding. In fact, the term is not used in U.S. law, and it is considered by many scholars and critics to be even more vague than the legal concept of "obscenity," itself notorious for its lack of clarity. It has been and is used to attack and suppress literature, art, sex education and information about women's sexuality.

There is a vast and diverse body of sexually explicit writings and images designed, variously, to educate, disgust, entertain, arouse, shock, inspire and much more. Texts and images don't have straightforward meanings: the closest of friends can debate for hours whether a particular, perhaps violent, movie scene is valid and essential to the work or seriously exploitative, whether and how it is sexist, and what kinds of effects it might have. To many of us, it is terrifying to contemplate turning such personal judgments over to any group or to any government body.

The lives of too many women are affected by racism, poverty, violence and sexual oppression in its innumerable

manifestations. In seeking new theories to remedy these old injustices, anti-pornography feminists have chosen a path—censorship—that has often been tried, and has always been found ineffectual as well as damaging. The censor acts on behalf of the status quo: the established religion, the establishing political, economic, social and sexual order. And his or her remedy for many ills is *more* control.

Every disadvantaged group needs the strongest possible system of free expression to voice grievances and to agitate for change. As feminist journalist Ellen Willis has asked: "When will oppressed groups learn that if you give the state enough rope it will end up around our necks?"

Pro-censorship feminists are supported—in their rhetoric and in their campaigns—by the same right-wing groups that attack art for being "pornographic" if it is not heterosexual and in every other way "decent" and "moral" and supportive of traditional values. These attacks are never opposed by the feminists seeking legal restrictions on pornography, even though the conservative groups also attack, today, as they have in the past, every effort to change conditions of women's lives.

In the past, the same conservative forces, exemplified by Anthony Comstock, brought us the persecution and jailing of Margaret Sanger for the "immoral" act of telling women they could decide when or if to have children. Today, these conservatives bring us an infamous gag rule on abortion (now administratively overturned), demand the banning of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* and the novels of Judy Blume, and promote the restriction of sex education in our schools. Anti-pornography feminists profess a different agenda, yet

they welcome these allies. Together, they presume to know what ideas, fantasies, words and images are right, for them and for every one of us.

During the last session of Congress, there was a groundswell of opposition from women and men to a proposed, and misnamed, Pornography Victims Compensation Act. It would have permitted lawsuits against writers, artists, book- and video-store clerks and filmmakers (among others) if a plaintiff alleged that a sexual assault against her was "caused" by the assailant's exposure to a sexually related book, or picture, or recording. This attempt to legislate the "porn made me do it" justification was adopted into the Republican Party platform, and favorably reported by the Senate Judiciary Committee. Only the rush to adjourn prevented congressional action.

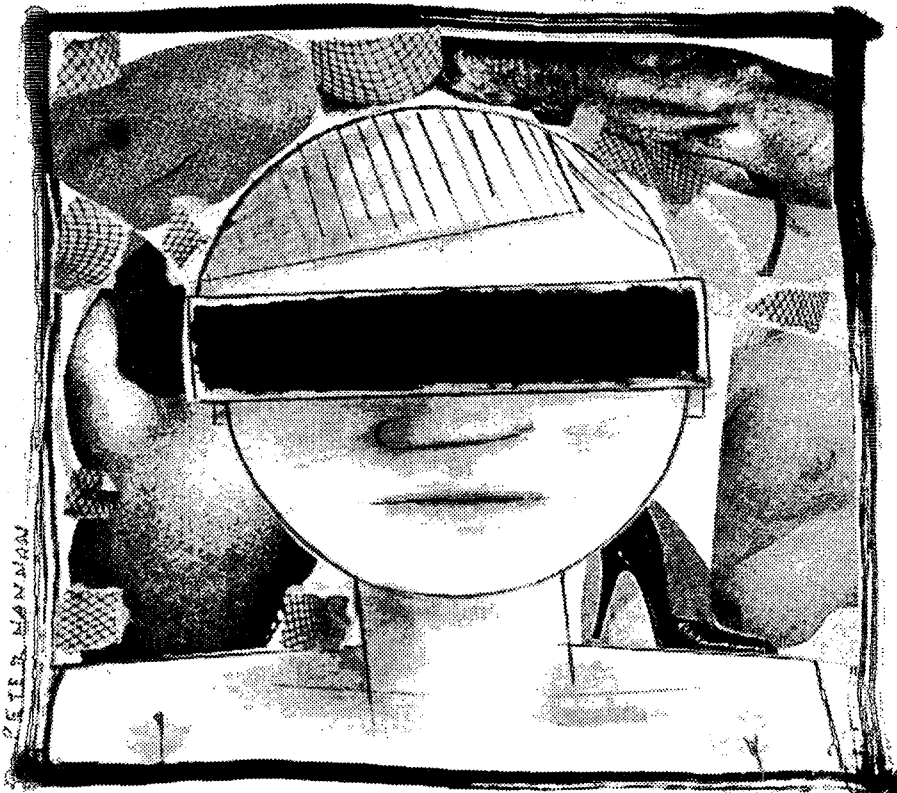
We feminists who oppose censorship believe that such campaigns invariably exploit sexual fears and uncertainties. Moreover, these campaigns promote the false message that women are degraded by sex and that women's sexuality is dangerous and must be controlled. We refuse the offer of censorship in exchange for "protection" as a terrible bargain—and one that has, in any case, never worked. Again and again, such campaigns have led to attacks on sexually related art and literature, on education, on entertainment and on serious inquiry. Women's interests are invariably hurt, because—big surprise—it is the unpopular and disempowered who are most injured by censorship.

As Leonore Tiefer, a psychologist and associate professor at Montefiore Medical Center in New York, has argued: "There will be no sexuality for women at all without freely available sexual information and open talk about sexual possibilities and experience, and there will be no open sexual talk if every seedling effort is met by knee-jerk congressional defunding and knee-jerk feminist outrage."

Tiefer believes "as a feminist and psychologist who specializes in research and clinical work on sexuality ... that women are in more danger from the repression of sexually explicit material than from its expression."

As we struggle for a more equal and just society, we are determined to dispel the myths that censorship is good for women, that women want censorship, and that those who support censorship speak for women. ◀

Leanne Katz is executive director of the National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC). A copy of "The Sex Panic," a report of NCAC's Working Group on Women, Censorship and "Pornography," can be obtained by writing NCAC at 275 Seventh Ave., New York, NY 10001.



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THE ENVIRONMENT

Chemical reaction

Despite growing evidence about the dangers of chlorine compounds, the administration has waffled. But proposed legislation offers hope.

By David Moberg

The campaign to eliminate industrial uses of chlorine—a fringe environmental movement a few years ago—is gaining new momentum and mainstream respectability. As evidence of health and environmental dangers continues to accumulate, chlorine has become the focus of two important proposals for amending the Clean Water Act, which is up for reauthorization this year.

Some environmentalists and labor unions think that a national transition from chlorine dependency could become a model for environmental-industrial policy. Such transition planning could both minimize hardship to workers and communities and generate sustainable manufacturing jobs for the future.

In early February, the

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed an amendment to the Clean Water Act that would mandate that the agency undertake a two-and-a-half-year study to develop “a national strategy for substituting, reducing or prohibiting the use of chlorine and chlorinated compounds.” Rep. Bill Richardson (D-NM) had earlier introduced a bill that would require pulp and paper mills to phase out the use of chlorine within five years.

Then in mid-February, the International Joint Commission (IJC), a Canadian and U.S. agency that oversees the Great Lakes environment, issued its biennial report, which more forcefully reaffirmed its 1992 call for “sunsetting” chlorine in industry.

The IJC reported that “mounting evidence continues to reinforce concerns about the effects of persistent toxic substances,” including reproductive, metabolic, neurological and behavioral abnormalities; suppression of the immune system; and “increasing levels of breast and other cancers.”

Even as their report was being prepared, that evidence continued to pile up. For example, in the February 9 *Journal of the American Medical Association*, public health researcher Devra Lee Davis reported a reduction of illnesses caused by diets and smoking among younger American adults. But this generation, roughly 20 to 50 years old, is developing cancers of all types at higher rates than Americans born just before the turn of the century. With age, diet and smoking ruled out as causes, some new cancer-causing hazards must have been introduced in the past several decades, Davis concluded.

One of the biggest environmental and workplace changes of the past 50 years has been the explosion in the use of toxic chemicals, many of them chlorine-based. With other evidence increasingly linking organic chlorine chemicals to cancer, including breast cancer, the new research adds to concern about the possible links of chlorine and cancer.

There is even clearer evidence that some organic chlorine compounds, or “organochlorines,” strongly disrupt the endocrine and reproductive systems. Recently published studies show that males of a variety of species—from alligators to humans—exposed to organochlorines develop small penises. There is also evidence of organochlorines being

linked to other male reproductive disorders, such as testicles that do not descend. (See story on page 12.)

These sexual deformities, like many other effects of organochlorines, appear to be caused by the exposure of fetuses in the womb or of nursing infants to organochlorines in the mother's body. Such exposure can also disrupt the immune system and lead to learning and behavioral disorders in children.

Organochlorines also have direct effects on exposed individuals: they are suspected as a cause of the roughly 50 percent drop in men's sperm count and a tripling of testicular cancer over the past 50 years. In addition, organochlorines are implicated in many instances of hermaphroditism as well as "feminized" behavior among male animals.

During its first year, the EPA under Clinton and Carol Browner failed to come to grips with this issue when it had a chance. The agency issued regulations on government purchases of paper and on discharges from paper plants that sidestepped opportunities to begin the phase-out of chlorine. The EPA also opposed the IJC proposal to end industrial uses of chlorine in October.

But apparently a few staff people within the EPA and the White House have recently become aware of the accumulating evidence against chlorine. The EPA will soon release its review of dioxin, a pervasive and extremely toxic organochlorine that is an unwanted byproduct of the production and destruction of chlorine compounds. The report is expected to conclude that dioxin is more dangerous than previously thought, precisely the opposite of what many industry apologists had claimed. All of this relatively new evidence led the EPA to propose its study on the phasing out of chlorines.

The chemical industry immediately set out to scuttle any such study. The Chemical Manufacturers Association demanded an audience with Browner, after which the group claimed that she had said the agency has "no plan for a ban on chlorine." The EPA replied that it will do a study and await the results. But the original language made it clear that at least reducing, if not replacing and prohibiting, chlorine usage was the goal.

Ironically, many industrial chlorine users, even in the United States but especially in Europe, are already shifting to alternatives. Nearly all Scandinavian paper mills use alternatives to chlorine, and their papermaking technology is rapidly becoming the industry standard. In other manufacturing industries, users of organochlorine solvents have found alternative water-based solvents or adopted clean manufacturing techniques. But instead of adopting such alternatives, U.S. chemical, paper and other industries are strongly opposing efforts to study the problem.

The tiny lobster industry could tip some big political scales. In early February, the Maine Health Bureau found high concentrations of dioxin in lobster tomalleys, or livers, and advised pregnant women and nursing mothers not to eat them. Maine newspapers called for tough action against dioxin pollution, which is mainly linked to the

state's paper mills.

The influence of Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, who is from Maine, may prove critical in saving the EPA study. The chemical industry persuaded Southern Democratic Sens. Howell Heflin (D-AL), Bennett Johnston (D-LA) and John Breaux (D-LA) to threaten a filibuster against it. That led cautious senators like Max Baucus (D-MT), chairman of the energy committee, to hesitate about including the study on the grounds that it could kill the whole Clean Water Act.

The EPA dioxin study will likely report that people are most exposed to dioxin through the food chain, the effects of which had previously been ignored, rather than through the air. One important source of both air and food pollution is waste incineration. Indeed, the IJC also recognized the crucial need for "stringent regulation" of all waste incinerators in order to achieve "zero discharge of persistent toxic substances." Rep. Richardson has also introduced a bill calling for a moratorium on all incinerators that would force businesses and local governments to shift toward reducing waste.

The new recognition of dioxin pathways and dangers lay behind an expert panel's mid-February criticism of the EPA. The scientists, led by former Occupational Safety and Health Administration director Eula Bingham, said that the EPA had inadequately assessed the risks from a big hazardous waste incinerator in East Liverpool, Ohio. Last year, the EPA allowed it to begin operations despite citizen protests over a multitude of legal and scientific flaws. If the experts' conclusions are upheld, it will be hard for the EPA to permit the incinerator to continue.

The chemical industry insists that banning chlorine would cost U.S. consumers more than \$91 billion a year and eliminate thousands of jobs. But even by their inflated calculations, 97 percent of chlorine could be eliminated at a cost of \$22 billion a year. That's far less than the estimated \$50 billion per year or more in health care costs caused by organochlorines.

Moreover, with careful planning, there would be few jobs lost. Paper industry mills could be converted to non-chlorine processes, saving hundreds of millions of dollars a year in chemical, energy, water and waste treatment costs. The industry would also be better positioned to compete for new markets in chlorine-free paper and new papermaking technology that would otherwise go to European producers.

A judicious mix of chlorine taxes, government purchasing, technical assistance and timetables for eliminating chlorine could convert chlorine-dependent industries in an orderly way. Tax revenues could go to help workers and communities where conversion is extremely difficult, such as the companies producing chlorine chemicals. The doomsday economic scenario projected by chemical manufacturers to scare politicians and the public is unlikely; their own resistance to orderly change is the real threat. That resistance also worsens the already real doomsday threat to human health and the environment. ▴

DIPLOMACY

A new foreign policy?

D

uring Bill Clinton's first year, he committed one foreign policy blunder after another. But in the last two months, he has begun to right himself, proving once again that he is a politician who does not make the same mistake twice. He now appears on the verge of developing a new post-Cold War foreign policy.

Clinton shows signs of formulating a sensible approach to the post-Cold War global order.

By John B. Judis
WASHINGTON D.C.

The first indication was Clinton's diplomacy at the NATO meeting in Brussels, where he artfully beat back demands for the admission of Eastern European countries into the security treaty—a move that would have expanded NATO's responsibilities well beyond its members' commitments and capabilities and that would certainly have speeded the development of a toxic nationalism in Russia. (See "Freshman follies," January 10, or, for a differing view, "Left in the cold," February 21.)

The second indication came last month—in his

new policy toward Bosnia and in his negotiations over trade with Japanese Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa.

Bosnia: Since August 1992, during the presidential campaign, Clinton has periodically voiced support for air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs, but then backed down when he found little support at home or abroad. Only the Bosnians themselves and an odd collection of the foreign policy elite—ranging from Republican Sen. Richard Lugar of Indiana to liberal *New York Times* columnist Anthony Lewis—cheered these threats of armed intervention.

Clinton's pronouncements fell flat at home largely because they were not rooted in any acceptable definition of America's vital interests. Americans have traditionally supported the use of military force only when they have believed that vital U.S. interests were at stake. It has never been enough that a nation was committing atrocities against its people or against a neighboring country; these atrocities

had to directly threaten Americans' well-being in order to justify the potential loss of life entailed by military intervention.

The United States clearly has a stake in Bosnia, but it is an indirect and even somewhat abstract one. The continuation of the conflict could, in the long run, threaten Central Europe's stability in a new post-Cold War order. Europe risks being plunged back into the internecine nationalism that plagued it from the 1890s through the 1940s and that led to two world wars. But for that very reason, Bosnia remains primarily a European problem that must be resolved by a united Western Europe. The war in Bosnia has justified aggressive American diplomacy, tied to a promise of *limited* U.S. military assistance to a predominantly *European* effort.

In his first year in office, however, the president failed to convince U.S. allies in Europe that military intervention could achieve the full restoration of Bosnian sovereignty. Air strikes alone, combined with lifting the arms embargo, would not turn the war in Bosnia's favor unless the United States and the allies were prepared to take the further, and politically impossible, step of sending in several army divisions into war.

Clinton's hollow threats probably worsened the situation in Bosnia by encouraging the Bosnian Muslims to hold out for an American-imposed victory and by discouraging the Europeans from attempting to impose an imperfect settlement through force. Last month, however, after the mortar attack on the Sarajevo marketplace, Clinton finally formulated a policy that made sense to Americans and Europeans.

He advocated air strikes to stop the shelling of Sarajevo, but he also backed down from the insistence that a settlement meet all the demands of Bosnian Muslims. On February 9, when Clinton announced American willingness to participate in NATO and U.N. air strikes, he also carefully

defined America's interests in intervention.

Clinton explained that the United States had a "humanitarian interest" and an interest "in helping to prevent a broader conflict in Europe," but he added that "these interests do not justify unilateral American intervention in the crisis." He assured Americans that our participation "will be proportionate to our interests; no more and no less." He also rejected the aim of assuring Bosnian victory: "We have also insisted that NATO not commit itself to any objectives it cannot achieve. Important as these NATO actions are, we must understand that in the end, this conflict must be settled at the negotiating table by the parties themselves."

Clinton also said American participation was important to demonstrate that "NATO ... remains a credible force for peace in post-Cold War Europe." But the president knows that NATO's success in Bosnia could have an even more desirable effect: it could move Western Europe countries toward taking responsibility for policing their own region. That would narrow the scope of American military responsibility and make it possible for the United States to devote more resources to social problems at home.

Japan: Clinton began his stay in the White House by talking tough about Japan, but he then vacillated and equivocated. Last spring, Clinton announced that he would demand specific "results" from Japan—a code word for a managed trade policy in which Washington would insist that Japan meet numerical goals in ending its trade surplus with the United States. Clinton was entirely justified in doing so. Japan's \$50 billion annual surplus with the United States has survived every conventional remedy—from the removal of formal tariffs to changes in the exchange rate. These formal remedies had little impact, because Japan's surplus is based on informal barriers—private arrangements among Japanese firms and their suppliers, as well as Japanese producers and distributors. Altogether, the Japanese trade surplus has cost American workers about 1.5 million jobs.

The United States had tried a results-oriented strategy in semiconductor trade, using sanctions to force Tokyo to agree to raise the level of imported semiconductors to 20 percent of the Japanese market. The strategy worked. By last spring, Japan had raised its imports to the target level. Now Clinton and his U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor advocate extending this policy to other industries

and to Japanese imports.

At last July's talks in Tokyo, however, the Japanese refused to accept numerical targets. Instead, they were only willing to accept a vague formulation about achieving a new "framework" in U.S.-Japan trade. Clinton, at the urging of White House aide David Gergen, sought to interpret defeat as a victory, sowing the seeds for subsequent disillusionment when the Japanese insisted that they had not agreed to any specific increase in imports. As if to dramatize Japanese intransigence, the foreign share in Japan's semiconductor market dropped to 18 percent.

As the talks in Washington commenced last month, Japanese officials urged Clinton to accept symbolic assurances of Japanese good will. But Clinton stood firm. At his

February 11 press conference, Clinton took the unprecedented step of declaring the trade talks a failure. Clinton's statement sets the stage for Washington to use sanctions in order to force the Japanese to reduce their trade surplus with the United States. But it also establishes a new post-Cold War relationship between the United States and Japan—one in which the economic questions override security concerns.

Clinton will be under intense pressure to abandon these innovations in American foreign policy. Hosokawa had no sooner departed than Japan's lob-

byists in Washington and their allies in the press and at think tanks were attacking the president. The *Washington Post's* Hobart Rowen, for instance, warned that Clinton was creating a new "trade war." If he imposes sanctions, Clinton will also have to overcome objections from American corporations that depend upon Japanese suppliers and fear any kind of trade friction.

Clinton will face a different kind of pressure in Bosnia. He will have to steer a firm course between the neo-isolationists who reject joint American efforts under NATO and the U.N. and the interventionists who want Clinton to commit ground troops on behalf of a restored Bosnia. If Clinton does persevere, he will have laid the groundwork for a new American foreign policy—one that combines a multilateral diplomacy, backed, if necessary, by the limited use of force, with an aggressive defense of American national economic interests. This is an appropriate policy for a time when the United States no longer faces a significant military adversary and can therefore direct itself to the social and economic well-being of its people. ▲



Time of troubles

F

ive out of six blast furnaces at the immense, rambling Elektrostal steelworks are dead and silent now. A few volunteers, stamping their feet in the sub-zero cold, keep the last furnace on-line and receive a share of the production in lieu of wages.

"We come here mainly out of hope," says Valery Strikhin, a trade union steward who has worked 22 years in the plant. "Someday customers for our steel will appear, and we will be here to receive them." He gestures toward the single functioning hearth, glowing like a dull red-dwarf sun in the vast darkness of the dying plant. "If we let that one go out, it's the end," he says. "It would be virtually impossible to restart them."

Once, not so long ago, this was unthinkable. The Elektrostal steelworks were a vital part of a proud and powerful industrial

machine. Amid the controlled chaos of shooting sparks, rumbling overhead cranes and clouds of angry steam rising from white-hot ingots, some 10,000 workers churned out 1,500 tons of steel every month. Most of it went to the Soviet military, for use in submarines, aircraft and armor-plated vehicles.

But military orders are sharply off, and no one else seems to want these products. For three years the plant's directors borrowed heavily to purchase raw materials and meet payrolls. Late last year, with a huge stockpile of unsold steel and no more credit in sight, they began shutting it down. Today, 60 percent of the workforce is on indefinite "unpaid leave" and the remainder have received no wages since last September. None of these workers show up in Russia's derisory unemployment rate of 1.5 percent; they are still listed as employed.

This is not an isolated case. Most of Russia's heavy industry is starved of raw materials, cut off from traditional markets, burdened by debt, and grinding to a halt. Ironically,

for some industries the prime culprit is the Russian government itself, which ordered goods and then refused to pay. Government reformers such as former Deputy Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar and ex-Finance Minister Boris Fyodorov have bragged that their "responsible" monetary policies brought Russia's stubborn inflation rate down to just 12 percent in December. The slightly more sordid truth is that this was achieved at least partly by hanging millions of Russian workers out to dry.

Since last summer, few state-owned industries have been fully paid for goods and services rendered; and collective farmers who duly turned over their crops to the state last fall are still awaiting payment of 600 billion rubles (about \$400 million) owed them. The Russian Central Bank estimates the government's debt to industry at 7.8 trillion rubles (about \$5 billion) in January. Among those hardest hit are petroleum workers and coal miners. Russia's military industries are owed a whopping 2.3 trillion rubles (about \$1.5 billion) for goods already provided on state contracts.

Elektrostal is a community of 120,000, about an hour's drive, but a world away, from downtown Moscow. Virtually everyone in town belongs to one of three industries, two of which are on the skids. Little of the commercial activity and flamboyant new wealth that so impresses visitors to downtown Moscow is in evidence here. No bustling street trade, no fancy boutiques or well-stocked supermarkets, not a single foreign-made car in the streets. The apparent reason is that there are hardly any consumers in Elektrostal. There are lots of people, even hard-working ones, but few have money to spend.

"We live on bread and tea," says Lydia Loginova, a 40-year-old machinist at the EZTM machine tool enterprise,

*Nearly a third
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And when
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an avalanche.*

By Fred Weir
ELEKTROSTAL, RUSSIA

Elektrostal's second biggest industry. "Thank god we put away a lot of preserves last fall, or we would be starving now."

Theoretically, Loginova earns 20,000 rubles (about \$14) per month. But she hasn't received even that since November. It's hard to understand how anyone can survive this kind of economic pressure. People manage by growing a little on their own, turning to better-off friends and relations for help and moonlighting when they can. Last December, Loginova took her Soviet-made video player, purchased through the factory waiting list two years ago, and sold it in a Moscow flea market for 55,000 rubles (about \$37). That sum has tided the family over through the worst months of the winter.

The state-run Center for Economic Analysis reported in January that the richest 10 percent of Russians now take 30 percent of the country's total income. Their average income is now 10.8 times higher than the poorest 10 percent of Russians, up from 8.7 times in 1992. An analysis by the trade union newspaper *Trud* in early February warned that 54 million Russians, 36.2 percent of the population, are living below the poverty line.

"Now we see concealed forms of starvation," Ilya Kuzin, chief doctor of Botkin Hospital in Moscow, told *Trud*. "One-third of the population suffers from insufficient consumption of vitamins and proteins. Due to the poor quality of food, people's immunity to diseases has been weakened."

The one industry in Elektrostal that is doing well produces components for nuclear power plants. (See *In These Times*, Oct. 18, 1993.) It is still strictly off-limits to foreigners, but one manager told me it employs almost 20,000 people earning an average of 250,000 rubles (about \$160) per month. The enterprise's good fortune stems from the bad luck of others: War-torn and energy-strapped Armenia is trying to restart a Soviet-built atomic station that was closed down after the 1988 earthquake; Ukraine, unable to pay for oil and gas imports, is expanding capacity at Chernobyl and another nuclear power plant.

But despite that bright spot, it is hard to regard the bleak landscape of Elektrostal with any optimism. "There is nothing

here to build on," says 18-year-old Svetlana Zhukova, who commutes every day to technical school in Moscow and is studying English in her spare time. "When the industries have gone, there will be only a shell here, full of people with nowhere to go."

Zhukova plans to escape from Elektrostal. Learning English may help to land her a job with one of the foreign firms or joint ventures that operate in Moscow. Or, she suggests, perhaps a foreign husband. "One thing is absolutely certain. I'm not marrying anyone from Elektrostal," she says.

Her dilemma is shared by millions of Russian youths who were raised in relatively modern conditions, given a decent education and made to believe they were citizens of a great power. For them, social collapse and poverty is the defining reality; finding an individual way out is the most urgent task of their lives.

"My mother goes to her factory every day. She sits there and gossips with her friends. They convince each other there is hope in new politicians or more privatization or returning to socialism or something," says Zhukova. "That's all an illusion. The truth is if you don't do something for yourself, you will die."

According to a study released by the International Labor Organization in January, nearly a third of Russian factories fear bankruptcy this year. When the collapse begins it is likely to swiftly build into an avalanche. Western economists argue that, however painful, this "creative destruction" will release labor and resources for more rational activities, which will be to everyone's benefit in the long run. But in Elektrostal, after considerable destruction, there is still no sign that creative market forces are moving in to rearrange anything.

There are hundreds of Elektrostals across Russia, all linked together by a chain of mutual debt and the shredded bonds of Soviet economics. Millions of Russian workers still pretend to work, as they await what some fear will be a new *smutnoye vremiya*—a time of troubles. "There is a catastrophe coming. I can feel it," says Antonina Geraskina, a 38-year-old machine operator at EZTM. "This town cannot survive much longer like this."

Fred Weir writes regularly for *In These Times* from Russia.



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Off the Marx

By Jim McNeill

Early last October in Appleton, Wis.—birthplace of the John Birch Society—a large group demonstrated against a free trade conference being held in a local hotel. Sponsored by the noxious Rep. Toby Roth (R-WI), the conference was supposed to provide a bipartisan platform for Commerce Secretary Ron Brown to promote the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Tipped off about the demonstration, Brown canceled at the last moment, leaving Roth and a few hapless executives to face the protesters on their own.

The free traders were confronted by an unnervingly diverse coalition, made up of Wisconsin union members, Ross Perot supporters and an odd assortment of politicians. Circulating on the margins of the crowd, one John Birch Society member distributed an almost readable anti-NAFTA essay. Standing in the center of the protesters, another man wore a red T-shirt that simply said "Socialist."

Had Tim Wohlforth ("Viewpoint," Jan. 24) witnessed the demonstration, the Bircher's presence would no doubt have confirmed his worst fears about America's anti-NAFTA movement. Even the presence of the self-declared socialist would only have proven to Wohlforth that America's post-Marxist left has lost its ideological bearings.

In his piece, Wohlforth caricatures NAFTA opponents, especially labor, as troglodyte protectionists, incapable of appreciating the civilizing influence

of free trade. In support of his argument, he urges leftists to return to their Marx, asserting that "Marx strongly favored free trade ... because it encourage[d] industrial growth, innovation and productivity."

But this fall both the *Left Business Observer* and the *Wall Street Journal* offered more accurate accounts of Marx's position on free trade. In discussing NAFTA, the two publications cited his 1848 address in Brussels. "The free trade system is destructive," Marx declared. "It breaks up old nationalities and pushes the antagonism of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie to the extreme point. It is in this revolutionary sense alone, that I vote in favor of free trade."

Yes, Marx saw capitalism, as Wohlforth contends, as a "historically progressive" force, which would create the "productive infrastructure needed for a more humane socialist society." But Marx also assumed that after creating the infrastructure necessary for socialism, mature capitalism's internal contradictions would cause it to self-destruct.

Well, in the West anyway, capitalism succeeded decades ago in creating the infrastructure needed to meet the material needs of a socialist society. Yet Wohlforth still seems to hold to the view that capitalism cannot long survive and that its final crisis is, therefore, just around the corner.

Echoes of the naive '30s left resonate throughout his article. "Given

the nature of the world economic system, are workers as a whole helped or hurt by tariff barriers?" he asks. "I would argue that the working-class cause is significantly set back by protectionism." No specifics, no statistics, just pronouncements about reality as gleaned from Marx's writings.

Wohlforth says that "the general trend within the world capitalist system is toward the equalization of wages." Hmm. In Mexico, manufacturing wages have fallen more than 50 percent since foreign investment in the *maquiladoras* took off in the early '80s. He also insists that U.S. labor leaders who opposed NAFTA were narrowly protecting their own interests. But he fails to tell us that these leaders repeatedly cited the decline in Mexican wages to show that workers on *both* sides of the border are being hurt by the prevailing free trade ideology.

Avoiding this fact makes it easy to call labor's anti-NAFTA forces "ideological descendants" of the Luddites who "seek to resist the technological transformation of the smokestack manufacturing industries as well as the internationalization of the labor process." But don't mention this charge to anyone in the UAW's New Directions movement. Many of these UAW dissidents would tell you that President Owen Bieber's primary failure has been his willingness to cooperate with the Big Three's demand for a more streamlined workforce.

If anyone is engaging in fossilized thinking here, it is Wohlforth. True, the irrational protectionism that he detects among NAFTA's right-wing critics would harm workers in all countries. But American unions weren't seeking to close the borders by amending NAFTA. They were trying to protect workers' rights and environmental conditions in both the United States and Mexico. Apparently, Wohlforth feels that even these modest goals are dangerously protectionist.

Unfortunately, the "free trade" Wohlforth favors will hardly be liber-

ating. As Doug Henwood noted in the *Left Business Observer*, over 30 percent of all international "trade" involves cross-border transfers of goods within subsidiaries of multinational firms (i.e., transactions in which IBM of France ships products to IBM of America).

Free trade now is not nearly as "progressive" as it was in Marx's time. Today, restrictions on intellectual property make capitalist development much less freewheeling than during the 19th century. Then, American steel producers could pilfer the Bessemer process from British firms and still gain access to international capital. Today, any developing country that made similar assaults on intellectual property—or tried to forge a development strategy independent of the World Bank—would almost certainly find financial markets closed to it.

While lecturing us about the nature of capitalism, Wohlforth repeats Clinton administration platitudes about how job retraining and high-tech education can help counter this loss. It was almost unfair of *ITT*'s editors to insert a note in Wohlforth's article encouraging readers to see John Judis' story on worker retraining in the same issue. While Wohlforth believes that retraining will rescue American workers dislocated by NAFTA, Judis' article picks apart that notion. The Labor Department study cited by Judis shows that displaced manufacturing workers who participate in retraining programs actually fare worse than laid-off employees receiving no retraining.

Wohlforth also depends heavily on anecdotal evidence to make his argument. For example, he says labor's opposition to NAFTA is based on "anti-immigrant" prejudice because some union members made "crude comments about the Mexican people." While it's true that there was xenophobic opposition to NAFTA, it was mostly among Ross Perot supporters and other right-wing opponents of the treaty, not unionists.

Perhaps in Wohlforth's home state of California—where immigration debates hit very close to home—a dis-

turbing number of union members supported their anti-NAFTA position with racist arguments. If so, they were in the minority nationwide. Throughout the country, labor groups sponsored an unprecedented number of trips to Mexico's *maquiladoras*. Union members engaged in exactly the kind of cross-border organizing that Wohlforth calls for in his article. Such organizing will be more difficult now that corporations have more freedom to pit the workers of all three North American nations against one another.

Who really played the nationalist and racist cards in the debate over NAFTA? Wasn't it President Clinton who talked incessantly about keeping America competitive in the global economy? And aren't Clinton and his corporate allies still urging American workers to retain that competitive edge by working harder than their Japanese, German and Mexican competitors?

Wohlforth criticizes American unions for wasting their "political clout" in a losing battle. Yet the primary reason labor lost the battle is because Clinton sacrificed even more political capital buying the votes of reluctant legislators. Until the NAFTA debate was distorted by the flood of money in Washington, it provoked some rare discussion of the increasingly anti-democratic nature of the global economy. By pointing to the secret trade commissions NAFTA created, treaty opponents were able to show ordinary Americans the authoritarian character of actually existing capitalism.

By accepting unfettered free trade as an unavoidable detour on his road to socialism, Wohlforth is playing a very foolish ideological game. If American labor had cooperated in the latest push to industrialize the Third World along free-trade principles, it would only have helped hasten the spread of capitalism's socially and ecologically destructive practices. And if those practices are reproduced throughout the world, what will be left to socialize? ◀

Jim McNeill, a contributing editor to *In These Times*, is also the editor of *Racine Labor*, a weekly newspaper published in Wisconsin.



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I N P R I N T

After the fall

By Beth Maschinot

Scientific sex may well be an oxymoron, or at least a turn-off, but ever since the early sexologists, sexual passions and proclivities have been categorized, analyzed and generally poked and prodded into some state akin to submission. We now can categorize whether we're homo-, hetero-, or bi-sexual; and some of us even speak of fetishes quite freely. Female sexuality, that dark continent to Freud, has been particularly rich fodder for male scientists in their attempts to control an increasingly complex and baffling world.

While many histories have explored this juncture of male science and female sexuality, historian Regina Kunzel adds an interesting twist: in *Fallen Women, Problem Girls*, it is the predominantly female profession of social work that is doing the typologizing and objectifying inherent in early mechanistic social science.

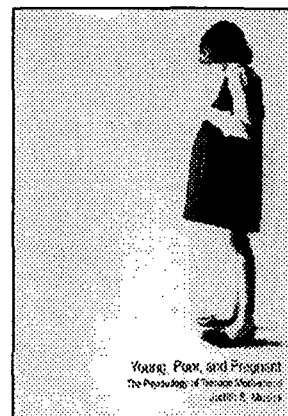
Kunzel fashions a wonderfully readable social history of the maternity home movement, which began with the largesse of "millionaire evangelist" Charles Nelson Crittenton in 1882. Over the next few decades, nearly a hundred Crittenton and Salvation Army homes sprang up across the country. Pregnant, unmarried women, usually working class and often disowned by their families, turned to these homes as a last resort. If they were white, and not a "second offender," they were usually welcomed in by the "benevolent ladies" who ran the home: middle-class Protestant evangelicals, who often had previous experience in the Women's Christian Temperance Union or the YWCA.

These "proper" ladies were intent on seeing their charges as "sisters," who, though "marching on the road to perdition," were not yet irretrievably damned. In fact, in the evangelicals' view, the girls could be redeemed if only they would return to Jesus, become dedicated to the purifying experience of motherhood—or, at the very least, marry a

decent man (generally not the baby's father). Kunzel points out that this construction, though patronizing, challenged the dominant Victorian view that any sexual "fall" equalled permanent ruin, for females anyway.

In the melodramatic construction of male-female relations of the time, the baby's father was more often than not an unscrupulous man who had promised marriage, and left in the wake of pregnancy. As one evangelical noted about a new inmate's story of conception: "It differed not a whit from hundreds of other stories. She had loved too much, and trusted overmuch." Kunzel wisely does not try to get at the "truths" of these stories, but treats them as a good post-structuralist would, as indications of how the evangelicals, and the girls and women they ministered to, navigated their world.

A mere two decades later the image of the pregnant girl (if not the daily routine at the homes) had shifted markedly. Social workers, new to the scene and eager to expand their authority into the arena of "illegitimacy," were applying "scientific methods" to the girls' experience. In the '20s and '30s, unmarried pregnant women were classified in a crude typology that was similar to those used with other "deviant" populations. Those girls who scored lower than average on the newly developed Stanford-Binet test [1908] were judged "feeble-minded," while those who showed signs of liking sex, or at least the man they had it with, were



Fallen Women, Problem Girls: Unmarried Mothers and the Professionalization of Social Work, 1890-1945

By Regina Kunzel
Yale University Press
264 pp., \$27.50

Young, Poor and Pregnant: The Psychology of Teenage Motherhood

By Judith S. Musick
Yale University Press
272 pp., \$27.50

the possibility of redemption, and “encouraged” women to keep their babies in order to learn the purifying and asexual joys of maternal love, years later the social workers “encouraged” their charges to give their babies up for adoption, since their scientific categories had proven the women unfit for motherhood. Most women complied.

And although the benevolent ladies’ belief in innate female purity left no room for the notion of female sexual agency, it did lead the evangelicals to decry the double standard that allowed men to enjoy sex with no consequences, while women who engaged in similar actions were branded for life. The social work discourse, by contrast, made the woman the problem, left the man off the hook, and did not take into account the growing vulnerability of women to sex amid the rapidly shifting mores of the early part of the century.

While the evangelicals based their authority on the Bible and their belief in the moral superiority of women’s intuition, empathy and purity, the social workers had a different god—professionalism. Like those in the male-dominated professions before them, their claim to expertise was founded on the scientific criteria of objectivity, neutrality and rationality. The consequent abhorrence they felt toward the evangelicals’ religiosity and sentimentality was thinly disguised. As one social worker explained about her work in the homes: “success is achieved in inverse ratio to the degree of emotion involved.” This application of scientific distance led many social workers to discount the girls’ stories of victimization. As one said after hearing of a marriage promise, and then betrayal: “Girls do make these representations, and very often, but are always to be discounted.”

According to Kunzel, it was the femininity of the evangelicals’ discourse that social workers found repugnant, because they realized that any female-gendered discourse would block their attempt to increase their status. Kunzel’s book points out the painful irony inherent in the social workers’ struggle: in trying to gain acceptance for their female-dominated profession, social workers ended up devaluing female experience and contributing to the pathologizing discourse surrounding female sexuality. As such, their actions were both “boldly transgressive and deeply conservative,” as they sought to subvert the former equation

of science and masculinity, while unreflectively adding to the stigmatization of female sexuality.

Though Kunzel goes to great lengths to represent the unwed girls and women as “historical agents” in their own right, showing how they gradually overturned some of the more repressive rules in the maternity homes, she acknowledges that their voices were “peripheral” in the battle of representations. But she does trace the gradually changing constructions of sexuality from their point of view, showing how the prototypical narrative of promise and betrayal at the turn of the century shifted as the possibility of female

sexual pleasure slowly entered the lexicon. Kunzel paints an often amusing picture of middle-class evangelicals and social workers who found themselves baffled when working-class women inquisitively began to explore the possibilities of sex in the “dance hall” scenes of the ’20s. She even manages to find some juicy quotes from girls who looked upon their stay at the maternity home as a chance to compare sexual techniques with other girls—though others saw it as a kind of prison, and still others felt comforted by the kind matrons they met there.

In the intervening 50 years from the close of Kunzel’s history to the present day, what was once pejoratively called “unwed motherhood” has been transformed into a less stigmatized “single motherhood”—at least for white females. The debate has recently shifted to African-American teenagers, now the most viciously stigmatized in the struggle for control of female sexuality.

Judith Musick’s *Young, Poor and Pregnant* focuses on girls (mostly African-American) whose pregnancies, if no longer seen as a moral failure, almost certainly ensure a continued life of poverty for the mother and her children. Musick’s book is an interesting companion to Kunzel’s, an example of the current understandings of teen pregnancy among poor populations. She makes it clear that it is not the pregnancy per se that is the problem, but being pregnant in a particular time and place, when and where the lack of community and family resources often make motherhood a burden for the girls and the local community alike.

Musick is a developmental psychologist who runs An Ounce of Prevention, a comprehensive program for girls in Chicago who are either at-risk for early pregnancy, or who



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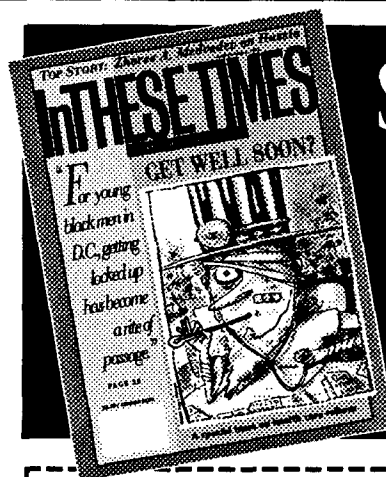
are already teen mothers. Unlike many of her colleagues in the pregnancy prevention business, Musick does not shy away from the insights of psychology in attempting to understand why girls give birth, repeatedly, even in situations that they themselves find overwhelming. While taking into account social and cultural factors, she argues that to avoid psychology is itself demeaning, for it subtly conveys the notion that the poor girls have no inner life, and are somehow ruled straightforwardly by structural factors in a way that other people are not.

Musick is well aware that by using psychological explanations she risks "blaming the victim" like all those experts before her. While Kunzel's history shows that the experts' application of psychology to social problems can be dangerous to the "subjects," Musick wisely turns center stage over to the girls themselves. The girls are encouraged to keep a diary at the Ounce of Prevention program. A large number of these have poignant entries about early coercive sexual experiences: "Dear Diary, Do you think it was right for me—they pay me to have sex with them? They got me broken in for this person I was going with." In fact, in Musick's sample of 445 pregnant white, black and Latina teens, she found that 61 percent had been sexually abused sometime in the past, and that the average age of first occurrence was 11.5 years old. Nearly half of these incidents involved men 10 or more years older than the girl. Musick's clinical work has led her to see this "sexual grooming" by men as one in a series of factors that influences girls to feel a sense of learned helplessness in their relationships to men, and yet also to turn to them in the hopes of protection.

Musick applies psychological insight to these experiences, but the framework she uses treats the girls' feelings and actions as understandable developmental desires, not as examples of pathology. In *Young, Poor and Pregnant* we see how the girls themselves make sense of living in poverty, attempting to accommodate their basic human yearnings to the limitations of their environment: wanting the stability of connection to parents or other adults and often not getting it, wanting a man to give the protection that is so necessary in chaotic urban poverty (though having a man doesn't necessarily help), having difficulty breaking out of the cycle of early motherhood for fear of being left out of the female circle of mother and aunts and sisters before them.

Musick handles these and other psychological issues with finesse. She uses social science respectfully in relation to female sexuality, bypassing both the patronizing attitudes of the evangelicals and the pathologizing typologies of the early social workers. Of course, Musick has advantages that these foremothers were sorely lacking: a feminist intellectual framework that includes a more elaborate understanding of female development, and a methodology that privileges the subjects' experiences. Her book, like Kunzel's, helps to provide a better road map to the "dark continent" of female sexuality. ◀

Beth Maschinot, a former *In These Times* editor, teaches at the University of Chicago's School of Social Administration.



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women, become brutal, unfeeling, cold-blooded or sadistic. It's a far different criticism to note that porn is sexist. So are all commercial media. The difference with porn is that it shows people fucking, and we live in a world that cannot tolerate that image in public.

MacKinnon's view of sex is as American as apple pie: she thinks every erection is a threat, that sex is men's domain and women's suffering. It's puzzling why she thinks this view is radical or iconoclastic. Her work has dovetailed nicely with the work of the most right-wing fanatics in the country. Her influence on legislation as important as the Canadian obscenity statute has resulted in thousands of books and magazines being banned, including authors like me, Kathy Acker, David Leavitt and even her dear comrade, Andrea Dworkin. (A Canadian customs official took one look at Dworkin's title, *Woman Hating*, and, dumbly using MacKinnon's criterion of banning anything that "degrades women," refused the book entry.)

Yet MacKinnon acts like *she* is the outcast, the martyr. Her book is published by Harvard University Press—a fact that, as Jonathan Yardley pointed out in a *Washington Post Book World* review, "is vivid evidence of the very free speech toward which MacKinnon is so cavalier." She has a tenured position at Michigan Law School. She gets called a genius and a brilliant mind by all sorts of mucky-mucks, and then she has the nerve to act like she's the Harriet Tubman of the underground survivor's network.

Sure, MacKinnon has the ACLU to contend with and plenty of booksellers and bohemians who are going to argue with her in public. But she has plenty of company among those who are offended by some kind of sex and believe that what they are offended by should be legislated against. It's the easiest thing in the world to be disgusted by sexuality—we've been raised to do it by rote. It's quite a different matter to embrace sexual diversity or, as a woman, to say that female orgasm is crucial to female power.

Virtually all men feel slandered by MacKinnon's descriptions of their gender, including a number of the judges she's been up against. But many of them also feel guilty about porn and sex, and when they see the evidence of men who have gone off the deep end, they often privately think to themselves, "There but for the grace of God go I." Such is the nature of the American Puritan mind: men feel that if they could have the pleasure they wanted, they would all go to hell in a handbasket.

Women, on the other hand, are so new at creating their own erotic market, so unaccustomed to finding that they can buy a vibrator in any department store in America, that many are eager to come out of the erotic closet. MacKinnon apparently finds the idea that women masturbate, perhaps even using sexy words and pictures, altogether unbelievable—possibly a symptom of a pimp's brainwashing. It's this arrogance and condescension that make women, not men, MacKinnon's fiercest critics and bitterest enemies.

Ironically, she is the fiancée of Jeffrey Masson, an author and psychoanalytic critic with a history of incredible and numerous sexual adventures of his own. Masson considers his sexual past to be like an illness, and he readily applauds MacKinnon's theories, even though he admitted to New York reporter Dinitia Smith that he had never read pornography when he was growing up, thereby missing direct contact with the poison MacKinnon describes. He says living with Catharine—he calls her Kitty—is like living with God, which I would find rather overwhelming but which he finds sublime. "I think Catharine is beautiful," he told Smith. "I don't think that's wrong."

What a curious thing to express in the negative: appreciating your lover's beauty as "not wrong," rather than flat-out *right* and *natural*.

MacKinnon, too, explains her relationship with Masson with a series of n-words. When Smith asked her how she could justify marriage when she has written that equal relations between men and women are impossible in an unequal society, MacKinnon answered this way: "Does one not have any relationships simply because society is hierarchical? We do our best. He's not not a man, and I'm not not a woman."

Not not, knock knock. Can MacKinnon extend the same generosity and opportunity to other women to discover how they can be sexually satisfied in a hierarchical society? Can other relationships, a wide variety, be given a chance?

But she's already been asked to listen to other women's ideas of sexual equality and liberation, and she has rejected them. Her declarations are so wild and her righteousness so dense, you can't help but wonder what else is at stake. When I look at MacKinnon's work, I feel like I am at the scene of a crime with the physical evidence well in hand but with an utterly puzzling motive.

What is it? Intense ambition? Opportunism? Bizarre psychosexual underpinnings we'll never discover unless she and Masson marry, break up, and have the divorce trial of the century? Why is it so important to her not only to stop women from masturbating but to shut women up? Why do we have to keep our legs crossed for her?

I could criticize pornography until the cows come home, but I will not criticize the power of pictures and words to arouse; to arouse passion or ideas, erections or damp panties, fears, curiosities, unarticulated yearnings and odd realizations. Sexual speech, not MacKinnon's speech, is the most repressed and disdained kind of expression in our world, and MacKinnon is no rebel or radical to attack it. The closest counselor MacKinnon can get to revealing anything of her own sexuality is to say, quite sincerely, that she is "not not a woman." Perhaps, for Catharine MacKinnon, that is not at all a small thing to admit. ◀

Susie Bright is the author of *Susie Bright's Sexual Reality* (Cleis Press) and editor of *The Best American Erotica 1993* (Collier Books).

I N T H E E N D

The prime of Miss Catharine MacKinnon

By Susie Bright

Yes, I have read Catharine MacKinnon's *Only Words*. I'm one of the miserable group of book reviewers and legal scholars in the country who forced themselves to read every word of her rotten prose. Even if I adored her politics, I would have to say

this book is unreadable. Andrea Dworkin, MacKinnon's collaborator and mutual inspiration, can write up a storm—I ate up *Intercourse* like a box of chocolates. MacKinnon, on the other hand, is the typical academic who must publish but can't write. But it would be unfair to dismiss MacKinnon for her grammar alone: it's the content of her work that chills me to the bone.

Like Muriel Spark's famous character, Miss Jean Brodie, who urged her young students to join Mussolini's cause while sweeping their hormones into her magnificent wake, MacKinnon's best recruits are virgins and naifs. Unfortunately, when it comes to pornography, few Americans, especially women, know a damn thing about it except that it's "bad," and so MacKinnon can get away with making statements that are right out of *War of the Worlds*.

MacKinnon draws a picture of pornographic filmmaking as a montage of concentration-camp documentary, high-fashion fascism and draconian male conspiracy. "What pornography does, it does in the real world, not only in the mind," she says. "In pornography, women are gang-raped so they can be filmed

... women are hurt and penetrated, tied and gagged, undressed and gently spread and sprayed with lacquer and water so sex pictures can be made. Only for pornography are women killed to make a sex movie, and it is not the idea of a sex killing that kills them."

Yes, for MacKinnon, porn is snuff and snuff is porn. She acts like it's just business as usual to go down to your corner video store and pick up a copy of an X-rated

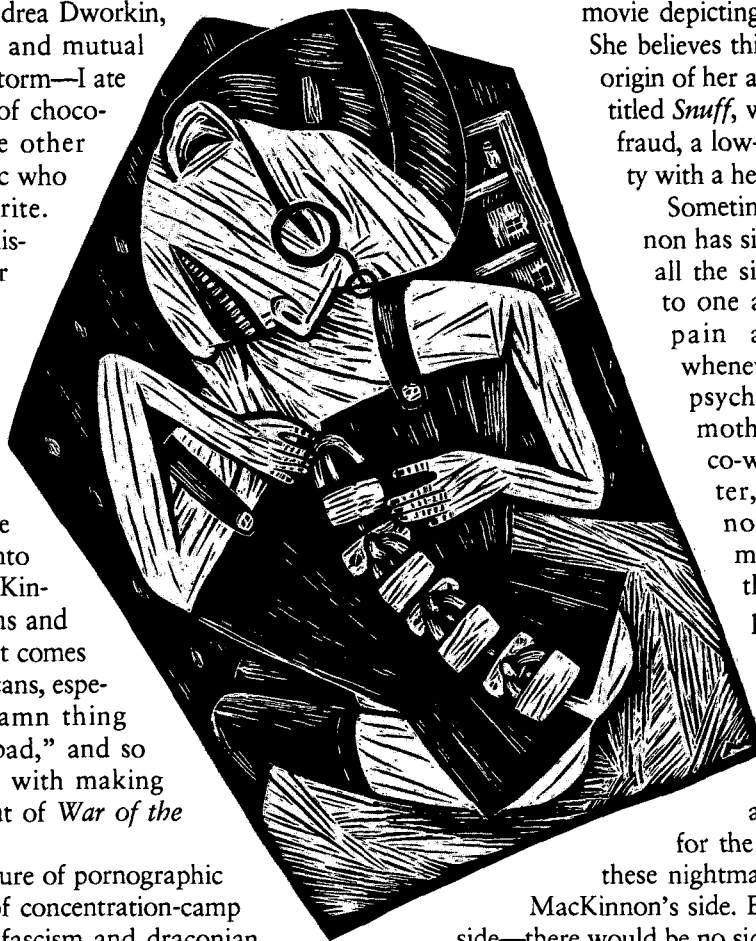
movie depicting a *cinéma vérité* murder. She believes this despite the fact that the origin of her anguish, the original movie titled *Snuff*, was long ago exposed as a fraud, a low-budget horror F/X grossity with a helluva marketing angle.

Sometimes I wonder if MacKinnon has simply been driven mad by all the sick things that people do to one another. I, too, recoil in pain and incomprehension whenever I hear about the latest psychopath who has shot his mother, machine-gunned his co-workers, raped his daughter, slashed a prostitute. I notice that such men are more likely to have read the Bible than pornography, but I do not hold either script responsible for their actions.

If I were sure that pictures were responsible, that masturbation and erections were liable for the physical harm caused by these nightmarish men, I would be on MacKinnon's side. Everyone would be on her side—there would be no side at all, and she would be out of a career.

But in fact, no one honestly understands why men, or

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